

CRASH

MICRO GAMES ACTION

APRIL 1984

75p

previews

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by Richard Wilcox

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CRASH

MICRO GAMES ACTION

ISSUE 4 APRIL 1984

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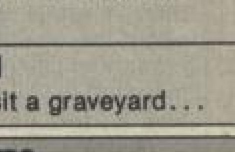
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Cover by Oliver Frey

EXTRA! EXTRA! SPECIAL CRASH QL SUPPLEMENT! Page 156...







The recent **Leisure Electronics Trade Show** held at Heathrow Airport (well in an hotel nearby actually) seems to have been rocked by those magazines which have taken a **Quantum Leap**. In the past early buyers of new computers have had to wait several months before getting a users magazine to satisfy their reading needs. But since Sir Clive D-jumped into the future and announced the **QL Computer** there has been a veritable leaping of quantums.

To date there has been no definite information on the QL beyond the lavish brochure containing its impressive specifications, yet already two magazines have retitled themselves. Perhaps most notably the E.M.A.P. publication *Which Micro & Software Review* (which to be fair hasn't put anything on the cover) contains the *QL USER* (incorporating *Professional Computing*), and the bi-monthly *Your Spectrum* has now become *Your Spectrum & QL User* (*YS* is going monthly soon).

WM has a *QL User* supplement loose leaf inside, whereas *YS & QL User* has their supplement stitched in, which makes it appear more established. In both cases there is really very little to say about the product beyond rehashing the extensive details included in the widely seen Sinclair brochure. Consequently we are obviously going to be seeing the sort of wrangles that have plagued the London producing centre for computer magazines during the past year, each of the larger houses all competing to be the mag with the most. It's all very well, and doubtless keeps lots of people employed, but it does become a nightmare for the software houses, who are forever bombarded with advertisement managers telling them that unless they're in **the** *QL User* they'll be missing out. A second later and another advertisement manager is telling that unless they're in *The* **QL User**, they'll be missing out...

Of course, Sinclair are hoping the QL will be a useful tool in the home and not just a games machine. But games playing will undoubtedly be a large part of what it does in the average household, so we'll spare you the QL User bit until there are a few real QLs about to acutally use.

CRASHTIONNAIRE

A recent letter received by Lloyd Mangram complained that we said in a review that two reviewers disagreed about the merits of a particular game, and asked why we did that. The reason is quite simple; if you have three players giving their opinions on a game they're not necessarily going to be the same and it's only fair to report that. Perhaps you find that confusing? Well we are offering you the chance to say what you think about a lot of things to do with CRASH Magazine, its reviewing system and software in general. Reader involvement is vitally important to us at CRASH. Your letters are all digested quite thoroughly, even if they don't subsequently appear in print. But letters do not always give a clear picture of what most readers think. That's why we have provided a **questionnaire** in this issue. The more forms returned to us, the better chance we have of finding out what the majority of you think about these subjects. So please fill out yours and send it back. You're going to be a great help to us if you do.

REVIEWERS COMPETITION

The response to our **Reviewers Competition** in issue 1 has been staggering. I had no idea so many of you were critics! Thank you for responding so well. At a quick glance at the manuscripts received, the overall standard appears to be extremely high. As a result, and because of the sheer number of entries received we are going to have to delay announcing the results by another month. Sorry to have to do this, but there is no other alternative as it represents days of careful reading on the part of several people before any decisions can be taken.

THE QL INFUSER

No sooner has the dust settled over the QL launch than newish software house **Joe the Lion** have announced the first of a range of games for the computer. Actually, what they are announcing is a program called the *Emulator*, which will be available on a Microdrive cassette and will allow you to load a Spectrum machine code program into the QL and run it as on a Spectrum. As the QL has no cassette port, a special connector will be included in the *Emulator* package to allow loading of Spectrum games from cassette into the QL.

Of course, if this all proves true, the *Emulator* will transform the QL from a business machine into the best games machine on the market,

INDEX REVIEWS IN THIS ISSUE



say Joe the Lion. On receiving the announcement, a few members of the CRASH team voiced doubts as to whether the claims can be true or realisable, and confidence wasn't inspired further by the tone of the press release, which went on to say that the *Emulator* is presently under development, and that Joe the Lion needs a team of prgrammers for the coding stage. Anyone with a good knowledge of the Spectrum, Z80 machine code and 68000 machine code should get in touch with Joe the Lion immediately.

If the Spectrum *Emulator* is successful, a follow up version for the BBC will be developed. Its price is expected to be in the region of £25. Anyone interested, contact Lawrence Holt on 061 366 5935

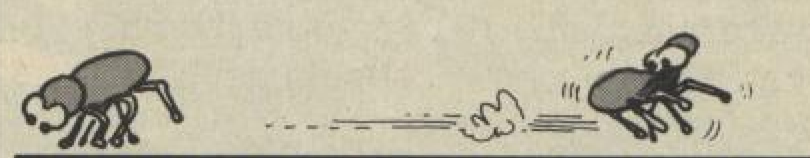
C.D.S. JOINS G.O.S.H.

C.D.S. Microsystems have become members of **G.O.S.H.** the Guild of Software Houses. **Grant Elner,** sales mananger for CDS sayd, 'G.O.S.H. has an important role to play in the development of the consumer software industry. The Consumer Charter which has been agreed provides consumers with a guarantee of reliability which in turn must benefit those companies who are members of G.O.S.H. and adhere to the Guild's quality standards which we hope will become widely recognised.'

Of course, it doesn't necessarily follow that all G.O.S.H. games are good games, but at least they should behave well!

G.O.S.H. also has an important role to play in protecting its member software houses from the rip-off merchants who sell brand new games and exhibitions at well below trade prices. This, on the face of it, may look good for the games buying public — everyone would like to get Automata's *Groucho,* for instance, at £3 instead of £10, but it has a hidden comeback. The software house doesn't get all the revenue it needs and so risks going out of business (not that Automata seem to be doing that, it would take a noise enforcement law to do that), which means that the public have less choice in the end. Besides which, thieves shouldn't prosper as well as the ones I have in mind seem to.

ADVERTISERS' INDEX



HOW THE RATINGS WORK

There has been much editorial argument over how the new games should be rated — and indeed, even if they should be. One argument is that giving games a rating is too inaccurate. We've all become used to computer mags doing something like it, but a rating is of little use if it isn't clear on what it is based. Some give a score out of five, some out of eight, others out of twenty. And we've all seen the bad reviews that gives five stars and the good review that gives two!

In **CRASH** you will find two sections at the end of each review which can be cross-referenced to the review itself. The first is headed **COMMENTS** and gives factual information regarding the program and a very general rating based on the three individual reviewers' opinions.

Then come seven ratings. All the figures given are percentages. Some of the headings are used differently than you may have encountered in other magazines. Firstly the heading **USE OF COMPUTER.** Until now this has usually indicated the use of the Spectrum's capabilities by a program, **but we do not use it that way.** After all a really excellent game may only need 9K of memory — who's to say whether that is a good or poor use of the computer? Some games don't need fabulous graphics to be great games — who's to say a game with simple graphics isn't making full use of the computer? It isn't a relevant heading for the games player. So our **USE OF COMPUTER** means, how user-friendly is the game, have they provided sensible keyboard positions, are there plenty of joystick options?

The other heading which differs in meaning from the way it is used in other magazines is **PLAYABILITY,** which up till now has usually defined what we mean by **USE OF COMPUTER.** What we mean by **PLAYABILITY** is literally that — is it a fun game to play from the word go? After all, a game may be enjoyable but not very addictive in the long run. We think it's fair to point out the difference.

Use of computer
How good or bad are the control key positions; is there a good range of joystick options; is the program quick to respond to input? In other words can you **use** the computer easily with this program?

Graphics
Speaks for itself.

Playability
Is the game fun to play right from the start or, after a complicated start, does it become fun to play?

Getting started
Are the instructions clear both for control keys and game's objectives? How good or bad is the packaging and loading?

Addictive qualities
How long do you want to keep playing, and will you want to play it again?

Value for money
Speaks for itself

Overall
The six above percentages are averages out to a final figure.

All the above percentages are based on an average of the three individual reviewers' figures.

SCALE OF PERCENTAGE RATINGS

Under 30%	a waste of time
31-40%	generally poor, but may appeal for some
41-50%	average
51-55%	reasonable if type of game enjoyed
56-60%	good on most counts
61-70%	generally recommended
71-80%	highly recommended
81-90%	Knight of the British Empire
Above 90%	words fail ...

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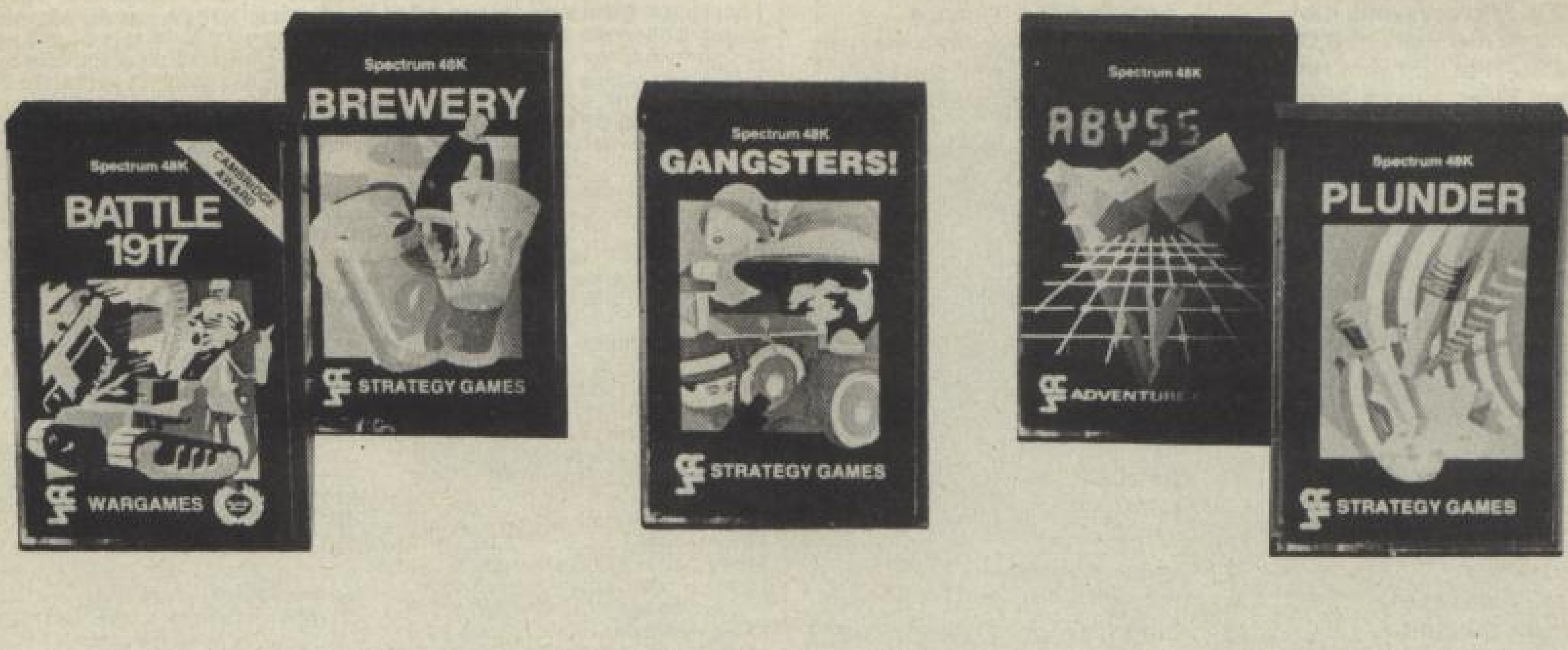
You'll get no peace in the prohibition days of Gangsters – if the cops don't get you, your rivals will. Try keeping your head above water in Brewery – a game all about liquid assets. We'll try our hardest to sink you in Plunder – a world of Elizabethan piracy. And we're sure Battle 1917 is more than a match for anyone – it should be – it won the Cambridge Award.

As if that's not enough, we've even created Abyss – a feast of excitement and hidden danger for those who dare defy the evils to be found beyond the Mountain of the Golden Lion.

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All available for Spectrum 48K at £6 (Abyss £5). Selected titles available from W.H. Smith, Boots, Rumbelows, Greens and all good computer shops or

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Games of the Month

Blue Thunder



Having shot away the Hyper-Phase Laser deactivated lock, the chopper faces the indestructible intermittent ultra-sonic quantum blaster - sounds like Blue Fun-der

Producer: **Richard Wilcox**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£5.95**
Language: **Machine code**
Author: **Richard Wilcox**

With the TV series of the same name on our screens Richard Wilcox should be assured good sales of his well promoted and now available game, but of course that still depends on the game itself, and *Blue Thunder* appears to stand the test with flying colours.

The basic objective is to fly your jetcopter off the deck of a ship, fly across a sea infested with islands, all heavily defenced by the enemy, reach a base where many of your men are being held prisoner and rescue them. To do this you must come to rest over the base, shoot out a whirling, rising and falling device which results in a nuclear reactor shooting up out of the ground behind you. This is unstable, so you must destroy it quickly. The reactor is protected by some of the most state of the art hi-tech you've ever seen (wait for this) Photo-electric perimeter shield with Hyper-Phase Lazer deactivated lock externally, and internally and indestructible intermittent ultra-sonic quantum blaster!

What this actually means is that you must shoot away the yellow forced field by hitting the rising blue stripe in it, then edge into the reactor core, wait for a factional gap between the intermittent ultra-sonic thingie and then bomb the hell out of the moving red dot on the floor of the reactor.

Getting to the enemy base is no picnic. Most of the islands are equipped with heat seeking rocket launchers or gun turrets, and on subsequent levels, not only do these fire more frequently at you, but they are joined by fighter planes, indestructible barrage ballons and a submarine armed with missiles that has a nose like a bloodhound. Top that off with a rapidly declining fuel supply and you have a game which should sort out the men from the boys.

CRITICISM

'The centre piece of *Blue Thunder* is, of course, the jetcopter. This is a neat piece of graphics; which ever way it is facing — left, right or straight out of the screen, under power it behaves just like a real helicopter, nose down under power, rearing back when braking. This also means that you can fire at a variety of angles, including straight down when facing 'out' of the screen. Getting past the guided rockets is quite an art. An element of luck creeps in because the various installations don't always fire at you as you pass, but they dont't follow a standard pattern either, so you never know when it'll happen. Throughout, the graphics are excellent with tons of detail and very smoothly scrolling pixel movement. It's a challenging and maddening game. I recommend it highly.'

'I timed the review so that I did it after watching an episode of the Blue Thunder *TV series — you've had the film, the TV series, now play the game! The graphics are superb, with plenty of colour, and the sound too is realistic — the chopper sound is particularly good. The main problem, in fact, the only problem, is the choice of keys. There is a multi-function fire button which will fire, turn the chopper through 90° and 180° respectively, depending on the length of key press. Spectrum keys are not ideal for this and it tends to make things a little hard, especially when firing overambitiously. But once you get used to this idiosyncracy the game soon grows on you. In fact it's an excellent game.'*

'Marvellous graphics, and good sound, plenty of colour, and action all the way. Totally maddening! The scrolling seascape is very good, but the effect of the unstable reactor appearing suddenly for the first time is like an amazing magic trick — a real effect! Getting in there is a job for experts with perhaps

On the higher skill levels, even getting off the deck can be difficult.



a bare second to manoeuver in, and shoot before the ultra-sonic gun gets you. Good hi-res explosions too. I've seen a few games recently from new companies which have sadly failed the test, but Blue Thunder passes with flying colours and proves itself a major Spectrum game. The idea of a multi-function fire and direction key is a boon once you adjust to the idea as it makes for money less control keys.'

COMMENTS

Control keys: Q/A = up/down, X/V = left/right, C = fire (short), turn 90° (medium), turn 180° (long)
Joystick: Kempston
Keyboard play: very responsive
Colour: very good, even startling
Graphics: excellent
Sound: very good
Skill levels: 5
Lives: 3
Screens: scrolling across approximately 8 times the screen width
General rating: highly addictive, very good value, generally excellent.

Use of computer	**78%**
Graphics	**95%**
Playability	**90%**
Getting started	**89%**
Addictive qualities	**94%**
Value for money	**92%**
Overall	**90%**



Sector 1 of the Zragg Caverns and a long, dangerous journey ahead.

Cavern Fighter

Producer: **Bug-Byte**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£5.95**
Language: **Machine code**
Author: **J.K.J.**

It might seem a little late in the day for a major software house like **Bug-Byte** to be releasing a 'Scramble' type game, but that all depends on how good the game is. 'Scramble' has proved a very durable arcade game as it combines those very skills of timing, speed and hand and eye co-ordination which originally made computer arcade game so popular. As our reviewers, generally 'jaded' experts, found, *Cavern Fighter* is a worthy addition to the shoot em up tradition.

It's a quite classic version with caves, missiles, city, fuel dumps (for fuel and points) defence installation, asteroids and alien fighters. Once a sector, is completed, it means that on loss of life you start at the beginning of the sector. The object of course, is to penetrate as deep as you can into the caverns (of Zragg in this case) and destroy the Dictator's lair (and save Watford — for what?) whilst avoiding the automatic missiles and guardians, and without crashing into the zig-zagging walls and ceiling at a reckless speed.

CRITICISM

'The loading time on this cassette was so short I thought it must be for the 16K Spectrum. It has all the usual features including asteroids. The game is very fast and fun to play and a good version of 'Scramble'. I stress the word 'version' because in some ways it's different from the arcade original — for instance, it all takes place in the caverns. The graphics are very good and the game is highly addictive to play.'

'One of the problems with a 'Scramble' type game is the handful of keys required to play it well — so top marks to Bug-Byte for providing user-definable keys. I think this is the most colourful version I have seen for the Spectrum, and certainly one of the most playable. The graphics are good, very fast, large and well detailed and they move very smoothly. The explosions are not what you would call spectacular, but somehow they seem very vicious and realistic. Great sound too. An excellent version and worth buying.'

'If you haven't got a copy of a Spectrum 'Scramble' type game, then this would be a good buy. The graphics are smooth and colourful, good sound. I couldn't stop playing it is extremely addictive!'

Entering sector 4 — The City.

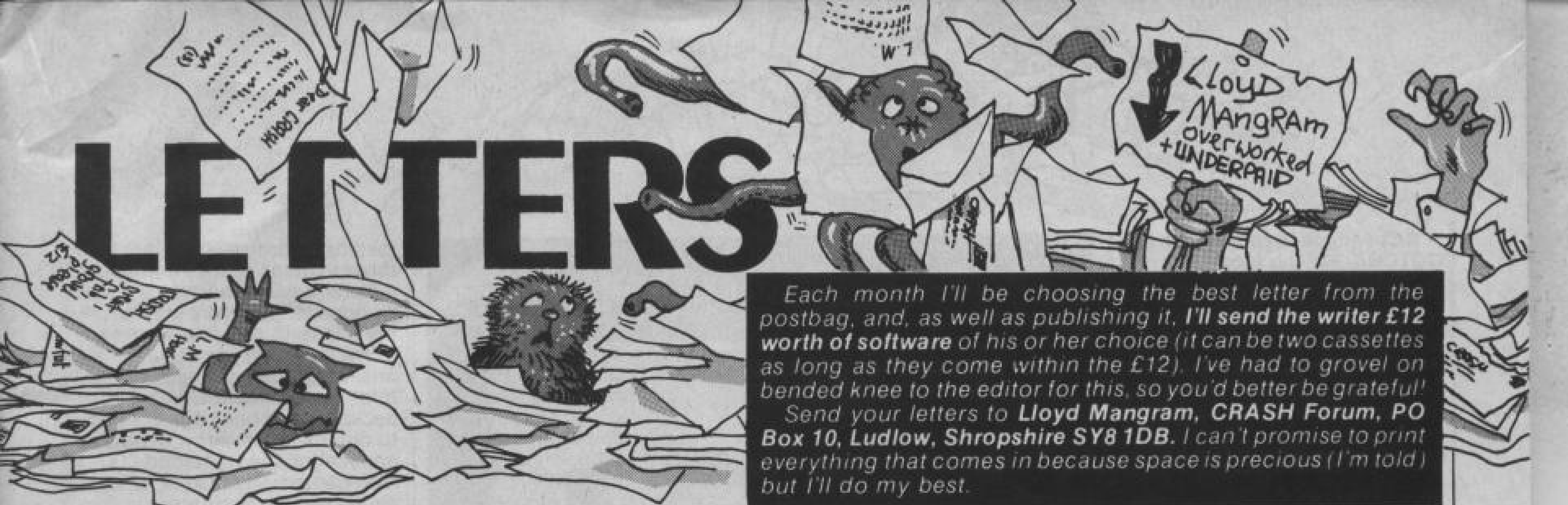


COMMENTS

Control keys: user-definable, requires up/down/thrust/brake/laser/bomb
Joystick: Kempston, but usable with most via user-definable keys
Keyboard play: very responsive
Colour: very good
Graphics: very good
Sound: excellent
Skill levels: progressive difficulty
Lives: 3
Screens: continously scrolling — 6 sectors
General rating: excellent value, a high quality version of a popular arcade game, very addictive.

Use of computer	**85%**
Graphics	**85%**
Playability	**92%**
Getting started	**88%**
Addictive qualities	**93%**
Value for money	**90%**
Overall	**89%**

LETTERS



Each month I'll be choosing the best letter from the postbag, and, as well as publishing it, ***I'll send the writer £12 worth of software*** *of his or her choice (it can be two cassettes as long as they come within the £12). I've had to grovel on bended knee to the editor for this, so you'd better be grateful!*

Send your letters to ***Lloyd Mangram, CRASH Forum, PO Box 10, Ludlow, Shropshire SY8 1DB.*** *I can't promise to print everything that comes in because space is precious (I'm told) but I'll do my best.*

Letter of the Month

WINNING AT JETMAN

Dear CRASH,

Many people appear to be having difficulty in getting further than level 3 in **LUNAR JETMAN**. This letter should help solve that problem, giving you a technique to amass well over 50,000 points and get past the teleport-stealing aliens on level 6.

First of all, bear in mind that you don't need to transport the bomb to the alien base, but you can instead shoot the missile by hitting it 8 + (level you are on) times. The problem is to gain enough time to shoot the missile down before it reaches your truck. Flying to intercept it doesn't work because you run out of fuel. The solution is therefore as follows:

Fill in all the holes between the two teleport booths (you might as well pick up the light gun turret while you are doing so) and then head for the teleport furthest away from the alien base. While you are in the moon rover you can use thrust and fire to raise/ lower the gun and fire at the aliens. Once you have positioned yourself beside the appropriate booth you can blast away at the aliens until the missile is fired and the warning appears. Then get out of the truck and enter the teleport, thus giving at the other booth (which brings you closer to the approaching missile). Don't fly about, wasting fuel, but remain in front of the booth until you see the rocket appear. (If before then, a rock or an alien is heading towards you, you can teleport to the other booth and wait until you think the danger is past then teleport back — don't wait too long or you may miss the missile)!

As soon as you see the missile, start shooting at it, and by the time you get back to the moon rover you should have blown it up. If all else fails, jump on it (this stops it dead — and you too). All you have to do then, is keep repeating the process. When you reach level 6 the aliens have the ability to teleport and steal the booths. The system I use is to place the teleport on the moon rover where the aliens will leave it alone, and then drive it around so you still have one teleport between you and the base. As before, when the missile is launched, you teleport to the other booth, move to one side and shoot into the booth, thus destroying any aliens who try to teleport. Try avoiding enemies by moving rather than the teleport method. When the rocket appears, shoot it down as before. Using this technique I have reached level 8 (rocket-firing aliens) several times, but I'm sure your readers will soon beat this. I would be pleased to read any comments on this method in future issues of CRASH.

Congratulations to Imagine on the **ALCHEMIST**, which I completed in two days (luck mostly).

Christopher Sutherland, Inverness, Scotland.

I hope Ultimate won't be upset at your leaking their secrets, Christopher, but as far as I can see you only left out one vital ingredient — skill! I like the way you glibly state — just fill in all the holes . . . ! It's exactly that minor problem that usually leaves me as one more little hole! So — let's see what other readers have got to say about this recipe for success. Meanwhile, your choice of software is already on its way, Christopher.
LM

MISWORDED REVIEWS

Dear Lloyd

Let me open this letter by congratulating you, and the CRASH team on your new magazine. Since I bought it I've hardly put it down. I have enjoyed the review section as it clearly tells you which games to buy. The best part is the pictures of the actual screen display as they tell you just what to expect (it's a pity they're not all in colour).

My only criticism is in the write up of some reviews which are worded so as to give the wrong impression. One said that **JUMPING JACK** was addictive — I found that after a few goes I got bored with it. The poem is terrible but I admit that the 'squelch' sound is great.

MONSTERS IN HELL has small one character graphics and jerky movement and the screen is unattractive. **STYX** is also rubbish. The screen is split into three sections, and once all three sections are completed you return to the start.

Anyway, apart from all that the magazine is great.

A. Crammond, Heswall, Wirral, Merseyside.

I wish we could do all the screens in colour too, but I'm told (by those-in-the-know) that the cost would be prohibitive. As to the wording of reviews, you must take into account personal taste, and the fact that our reviewers are only human — sometimes they like a game you might not, and sometimes it's the opposite. I actually think ***JUMPING JACK*** *is marvellous, though I'm not very keen on* ***MONSTERS IN HELL***. *Looking at the mini-review of* ***STYX***, *I would have thought it fairly described the game in much the same words you used (except for 'rubbish')!*
LM

CRASH INDEX?

Dear editor,

I bought your first issue of CRASH and found it to be quite useful. I like your format of listing programs 'under convenient headings' and also the 'Index To Reviews In This Issue'.

However, as a comprehensive ready reference, CRASH has failed in one important respect — it does not have an index for all other programs usefully described in the magazine, thus making it difficult and, at times, annoying for a reader to find a particular title if it is not in the main index.

So instead of having a an index to reviews in this issue, how about having a **General Index** for all titles covered in the magazine? I am sure this would be a tremendous help to us readers.

R.T., London W12.

When I humbly put this idea (which I thought was very good) to the Editor, he almost bit my head off, and threatened to fire me if I said another word. Reading between the invective that came my way, it seems that it's already an enormous amount of work just to do what we're already doing. However, next day, little memo appeared on my (tiny) desk which said 'Congratulations on a sensible idea . . .' and went on to say that CRASH is apparently going to offer readers a deal on binders for 6 issues which will have the most comprehensive index to ***ANY*** *reference made in those issues. At this point I thought I might be in for a salary raise, but the memo pointed out that this binder index is going to be a simply appalling amount of work, and as I was the one who came up with the bright idea, perhaps I would like to start on it right away . . . Thanks a lot, R.T.*
LM

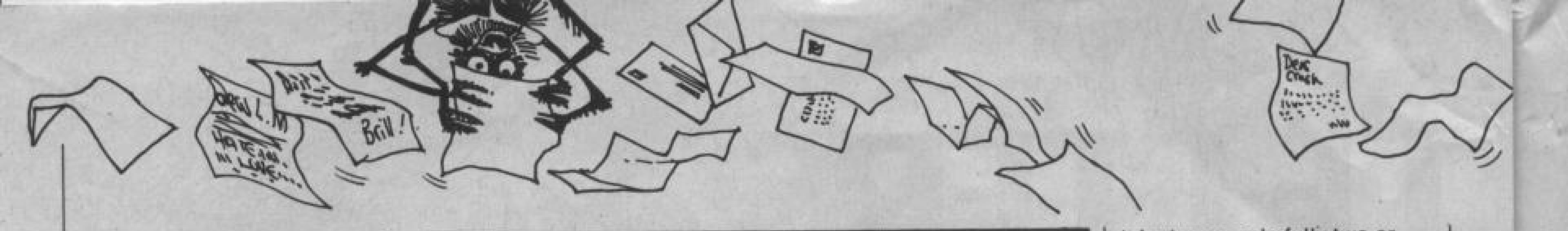
HARD WORKING REVIEWERS

Dear CRASH,

Congratulations on a well presented and informative first issue of CRASH, and on recommending **DEATHCHASE** as new game of the month, which, for your information, repeats after level 8. Having read through my copy, however, I would like to raise a few points.

Being the first magazine to give games software and games players the credit and standing they deserve, you are doing the whole image of games playing a great service. You are also making a very serious attempt to produce good reviews, having organised your reviewers and the criteria to which they work. But your reviewers **must** be very good games players so that they can get further than the average player and form a balanced, overall impression of the game.

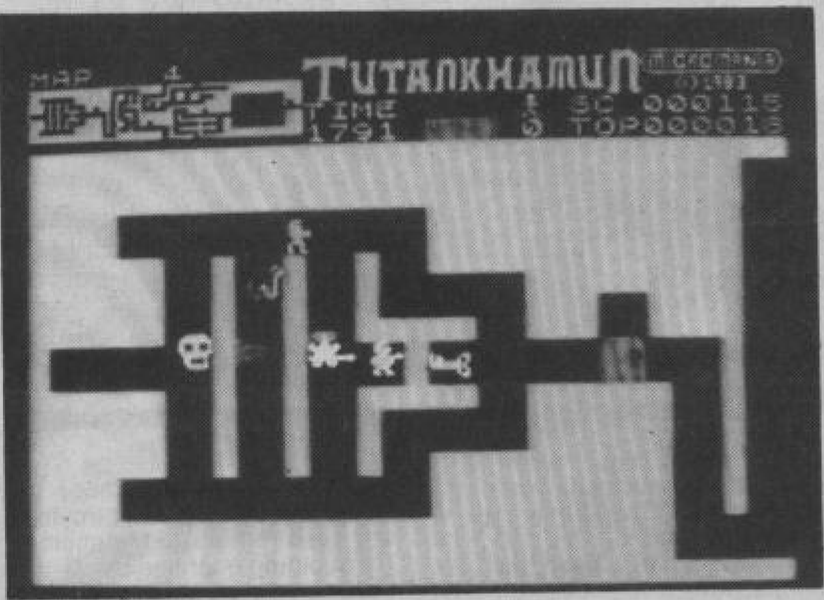




An example is your review of **GOTCHA**. Having read it I formed the impression it was a **MANIC MINER** style multi-screen game and bought a copy. I was a little disappointed at the lack of animation, and the first screen offered none of the precise timing required by **MANIC MINER**. The second screen looked far more difficult at first sight, and it is. If you do get past this screen, which none of your reviewers did, then you are presented with the same screen layout but with different objects to collect — hardly multi-screened. I stopped playing and phoned Blaby; they confirmed that the game just continues in the same way. If your reviewers had got past the second screen they must not have compared it to **MANIC MINER**.

Of **TUTANKHAMUN** your reviewer said, 'controlling your man can be alarming as he fires independently and tends to zig zag about if you leave his control keys alone for very long,' This independence is actually a bug due to Series 3 Spectrums. I sent my copy back to Dominic Wood, the author, and he has re-written the keyboard and joystick scanning code to take into account Series 3 differences.

If it's of any interest, I have reached level 13 of **LUNAR**



TUTANKHAMUN

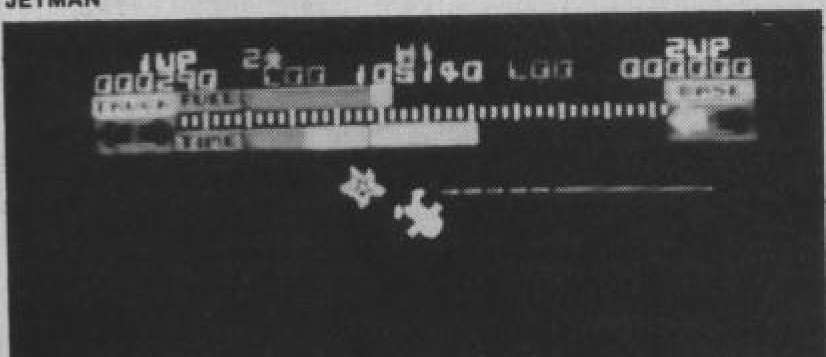
JETMAN with a score of 135,780 and still new graphics with positively sneaky characteristics keep appearing. Many thanks for the best Spectrum magazine so far.

R.A. Holman, Sidcup, Kent

Your comments, Mr. Holman, are very fair. In a sense I feel the value of a magazine like CRASH is that it can act as a sort of 'clearing house' of information on all aspects of games playing, and I'm personally delighted to see that a lot of readers are already treating us that way.

As to our reviewers, their number is gradually increasing, with time we hope to have some who are much better at one type of skill and some who are better with other games. But a point to bear in mind is that we are currently receiving in the region of 60 games a month for review. Since each game must be seen and played by 3 reviewers, each one has very little time for each game. It isn't always that they don't play far enough, but that they haven't enough time. It's quite logical that at home you will be able to play a game for hours and even days, and get a great deal further. After writing their impressions of a game, a reviewer may take it home and play later, finding out all sorts of things that didn't crop up when doing the review. And to a great degree, I don't think our role is to tell you everything possible about a game, or there won't be as much fun for you. On the other hand we are doing everything possible, given the huge number of programs around at the moment, to provide balanced reviews which are not misleading. Some may inevitably slip through — then it's your job to let us know what you think — and thank you for doing so.
LM

JETMAN



PLAY IT YET AGAIN

Dear Lloyd,

Firstly, congratulations on an excellent first issue of your magazine. It was all that I had hoped for and then some.

As I feel that the readers can offer a magazine as much as a magazine can offer its readers, I would like to contribute my views on the joystick (j/s) interfaces (i/f) currently available, since some of the impressions created by Franco Frey's article, "**Play It Again, Sam**" are at odds with my own experience.

Firstly, I think the "**Options**" should have been reduced from 4 to 2 — non-programmable and programmable. Over the past 6 months I have had experience of 2 from each of these options.

I have had a Kempston i/f with the Pro-Stik, and an AGF II non-programmable i/f, which worked very well. But in November I decided to move up to a programmable i/f. It is at this point that my experiences and those of Mr. Frey begin to diverge.

My first i/f was a **STONECHIP** — "a much better proposition" — to quote Mr. Frey. He goes on to say that, "pressing the appropriate key on the keyboard and at the same time activating the joystick in the direction required..." Quite true — BUT, "This procedure is then repeated for the other 3 directions and the firing action" is not quite so accurate! Unless Stonechip have redesigned since November, the i/f has to be programmed for **ALL** directions, including diagonals, both with and without the firing action, plus the firing action alone — a total of 17 j/s settings! This would often mean pressing three keys, and at the same time, holding the j/s in diagonal position with the fire button pressed. It used to take two people fully two or three minutes to fully configure a j/s for a game, and this had to be done before every playing of the game.

We found this most unsatisfactory, so I exchanged if for the **CAMBRIDGE** j/s & i/f package, and once again, I beg to differ with Mr. Frey. In its application the Cambridge really scores. By loading a short (approx. 1 minute) program, I have available the facility to set up the j/s for any game in my collection, simply by typing in the name. A simple program mod can be made to list and select games by number. It took about two hours to create this index to over 40 games.

The procedure for adding a new entry could not be much easier; simply reply to the 6 prompts by pressing a single key, and when finished, check it for accuracy. The i/f copes with all the combinations of the 6 primary j/s positions, so, provided the game can handle it, the j/s & i/f will do the rest. It can be a nuisance that this program must be loaded before game, but this takes less time than setting up the Stonechip.

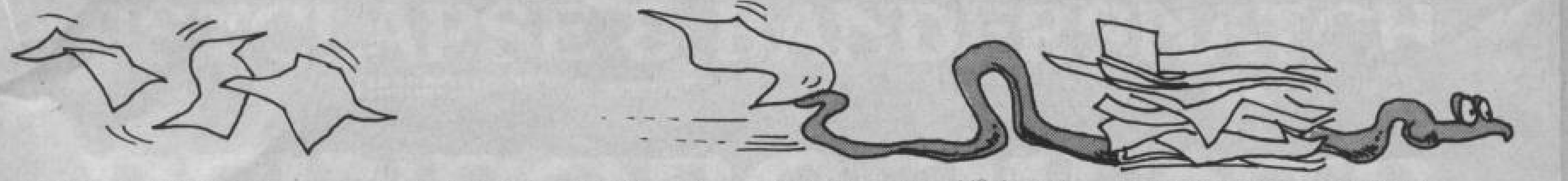
Franco Frey's article was the second that 'knocks' the Cambridge, and I felt it was time that someone spoke up for them.

A query. Has anyone actually used the much vaunted **TRIK-STIK?** I've seen a few comments which make great claims for it, but no one seems to have reviewed it yet.

Am I the only person to realise that **CRUMPETS** is an anagram of **SPECTRUM**??!!

Ian Muir, Cramlington, Northumberland

To take your most important point first, Ian, I'm sure Sir Clive is well aware about the anagram — there are unfounded rumours in the business that he wanted to call it the **ZX CRUMPETS**, *but the PR department prevailed! Working backwards from there, the* **TRIK-STIK** *seems to have hit a number of production problems, which has meant that to date only prototypes and pre-production models have been available for inspection. After a word with Franco Frey, he asks me to offer his apologies, in as much as the Stonechip i/f* **does** *require more effort and time than suggested in his article, with up to 17 different combinations having to be programmed. However the Cambridge unit does lengthen the loading procedure by at least a minute. Perhaps this worth waiting for, especially as, to his knowledge, this is the only joystick interface which caters for two independent firing actions — a definite advantage with most games. An apology, therefore, to Cambridge as well if it seemed*



that the article was down on them, but the point being made with that their solution, as with many others on the market, is not necessarily the final one.
LM

A BIT BLURRED

Dear L.M.,
I think CRASH is an excellent magazine, but the only problem is that most of the paper is of not very good quality, and when it shows pictures of most of the games it is all blurred and hard to see.
Fai Tang, Witney, Oxon

Having predicted your letter, Fai, we've already put the matter right, As you can see, this issue is printed on a shinier paper. I can't swear the photographs will be any less blurred, photographing games screens is not an easy task, and after ten solid hours of loading games, you can surely forgive our photo team for getting a bit unfocussed through the odd beer or two!
LM

CHUCK AN EGG

Dear Crash,
Having been a buyer and reader of your excellent magazine since the first issue, I feel compelled to write and say how much I enjoy reading it and what fantastic value for money it is. When I saw that there were to be no listings, I threw my copy in the air with delight. However, I feel that one or two reviews were not quite accurate enough, and here are a few extra points which people may find useful.

Regarding *Chuckie Egg*, people may wonder what the golden chicken does at the top of the screen. Well, apart from frantically flapping its wings, if you reach screen 9, it escapes and flies after you, disregarding walls, and is truly suicidal in its tactics (Nasty!!)

Onto *Lunar Jetman*. Your reviewer did not mention the teleport booths, which 'teleport' you to another booth about 2 screens away. I've scored 149,850 points, and can tell you that the aliens really get bad later on. There are mutant turbans which release white rockets when shot, flying saucers with umbrellas on top, saturns with revolving rings, bats with jaws, and many more.

Readers may be interested in these tips on *Atic Atac* (completed). If Dracula sends you scurrying off to another room, then try picking up the golden cross. He hides in the nearest corner. If you go up to him, he quickly runs off. Good fun chasing Drac for a change, isn't it? Also, if you pick up the spanner, you can kill the red monster a few rooms to the right for a healthy bonus. Oh, and my brother has scored over 1 million on *Zzoom*!! Is this a record?

Yours sincerely, Tim Higginson, Madeley, Crewe.

Certainly sounds like it, Tim. Actually I've had a few eggs chucked at me for the somewhat flippant and inaccurate remarks in the **Chuckie Egg** *review. There'll be three more reviews hanging from the gibbet in Ludlow town centre before today's out! Here is another irate reader...*
LM

HEN MANURE

Dear Crash-ers,
Now, now, people, after an excellent first issue, don't tell me you've dropped your guard a little in your reviews! Let me give you a couple of examples:

Chuckie Egg (My favourite arcade game — and me an adventure addict), Hen Manure does not appear in the game — in fact that "hen manure" is corn, which if collected earns you points. You also failed to mention that every 10,000 points clocked up gets you an extra life, nor the fact that after screen 9 the mother hen escapes from her cage, and then you've really got trouble!

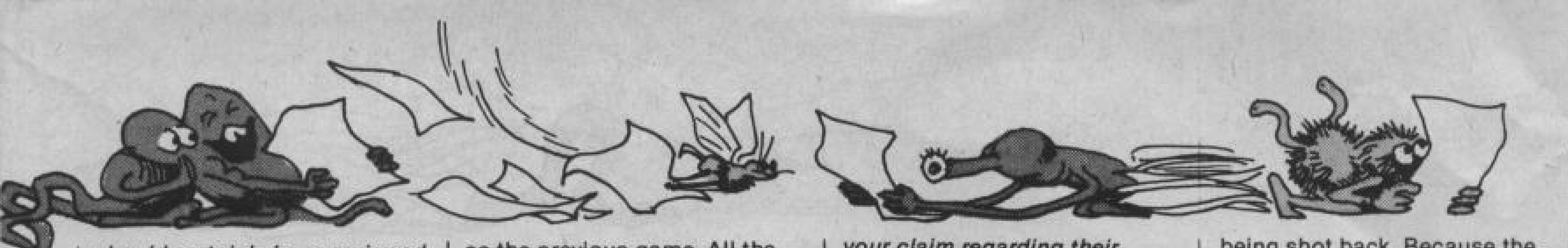
The second error comes in the software guide, in the adventure games section. In the *Ship of Doom* it says, "In *Planet of Death* there is a computer which you may..." Ship of Doom? Planet of Death?

On the plus side, unlike R.D. Hammond (letter page), I do like *The Terminal Man*. The name CRASH doesn't seem to be any deterrent to sales either, from the speed in which it disappeared from shops. I had great difficulty getting a second copy for myself. Could I suggest you do a review on the excellent *Velnor's Lair* to let all those who do not know the game, what they are missing.

Finally, I have a message for the reviewer of *The Mountains of Ket*, who tried using the axe on the shopkeeper. Tell him that he'd be better off chopping logs with it — after all, some people are willing to pay a lot for firewood. Also, I noticed a mistake in *Chuckie Egg's* price. You quote it as £7.90, when in the A & F ad in the mag the game costs £6.90.

Yours, Brian H. Longstaff, Sheffield.

Whoops, whoops, whoops, where would we be without you guys out there putting us right? C'est la vie. **Velnor's Lair**



should certainly be re-reviewed. It's one of my favourites (and me an arcade addict). The misquoted price for **Chuckie Egg** *was due to a surcharge for the 'hen manure'. Anyway, I've written an Infernal Memo to the Editor about the whole affair — after all, I have to get my own back somehow.*
LM

ORACULAR RAGE

Dear CRASH,

I couldn't resist the temptation to write to you concerning your review on **ORACLE'S CAVE** by Doric. It's utterly fascinating, and totally absorbs you with some great graphics and great ideas. Once you've started this game, it's almost guaranteed you won't stop. It's brilliant!

Are you reviewers blind?





They must be to give graphics just 73%, and as for giving its addictive qualities 60%, it's a disgrace! I almost had to go to hospital suffering from shock after seeing the points made and the marks given. Value for money has to be 100% and playability 95%.

Not only is this game simple to master, but it gives you a great feeling of total command and responsibility. It must be one of the great names for the Spectrum, comparable with **CHEQUERED FLAG, THE HOBBIT** and other such classics. I hope you print this letter.

T. Stabler, East Winch, Kings Lynn, Norfolk.

The reviewers concerned have been chained up, whipped and made to play **ORACLE'S CAVE** *until they repented their folly.*
LM

ATIC ACRACK

Dear Sir,

Do you know if I'm one of the first people to crack **ATIC ATAC**? I found the three parts to the key and scored 72%, as a Wizard.

The three parts to the key are sometimes in the same place as the previous game. All the keys (especially the yellow key) are useful, and look for a trapdoor between two tables — be sure to cross it at the right moment! So far, I think **ATIC ATAC** is Ultimate's best game and for only £5.50, it is fantastic value for money.

Stuart Mitchell, Knaresborough, N. Yorks (age 13)

Any comments from other **ATIC ATACCERS**?
LM

HUMMER HOUSE OF HORROR

Dear CRASH,

I have just bought a copy of your brilliant magazine and I have noticed you mention a game called **HUMMER HOUSE OF HORROR** by Lasersound. I would like to tell you that Lasersound have gone bankrupt a few months ago. I hope this comes in useful to you. I sent to them to get a game and got a blank cassette. I got in touch with them and they told me they had gone bankrupt and I lost my money. I would advise anyone not to get anything from Lasersound.

Stephen Cavanagh, Liverpool.

Stephen, we have tried contacting Lasersound at their offices in East London. Up until a few weeks ago, there was someone answering the telephone, but answers were very evasive on all counts. Telephone calls made on your behalf this week have been unsuccessful owing to the fact that Lasersound's telephone appear to have been disconnected. In the absence of any response from that company we must assume that your claim regarding their bankruptcy is well founded, and we would advise CRASH readers to have no further dealings with them. **HUMMER HOUSE OF HORROR** *and* **EGG FARM** *have now been deleted from the Guide Section.*
LM

CRITICISM

Dear CRASH,

Congratulations for an excellent magazine format. Crash has already been a valuable source of information for me as a software writer (author of *3D Space Wars, 3D Seiddab Attack*).

The reviews are very good but I feel that the point system is not always used to reflect the reviewers rating of a specific category but rather his overall opinion. For instance if a reviewer really likes playing a game it usually has a high "Use of Computer" even if the category was criticised for bad keyboard choice or no joystick option. In the same way graphics can be seen as marked higher on favourite games despite remarks such as "small", "relatively simple", "jerky". Setting up was a category abused in this way where for simple arcade games there is hardly any difference as most just load and go.

I was surprised to see relatively high marks on the cheap to produce easy to write arcade type games of yester-year and think originality should be a marks category where Space Invaders for instance gets about 5 per cent. Do the public really prefer copies of old games that invariably cannot be programmed to the standard of the original? I believe the future will belong to the games that use the advantages of a home micro over a slot machine. For instance the aim should be to involve the player in a total experience rather than beat him as quick as possible and make sure he will play again. Perhaps your readers could say what it is they would really like from future games.

Regarding your review of *3D Space Wars* you mention the fuel goes down rapidly. It is only decremented when you fire (very slightly) and when you are hit by an enemy phasor bolt. There is a tactical skill factor to the game whereby you use the radar to pick off the enemy one or two at a time splitting the fleet up. By attacking upwards bringing the enemy in from the top of the screen you minimise the risk of being shot back. Because the game gives you absolute choice of direction (8 directions really are not good enough nowadays) a whole new dimension of skill is obtained. This may take longer to achieve but the rewards are even greater and last longer than a quick to master control.

Steve Turner, Witham, Essex.

ART PAGE

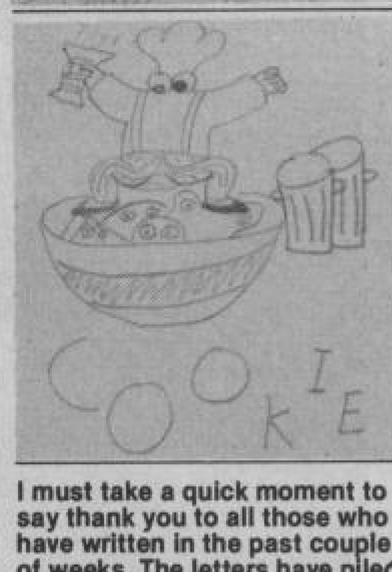
Dear CRASH,

I was reading CRASH and was horrified to see you did not have a page where we readers can send in our drawings of game characters. I know other magazines hardly have such pages. So put one of these pages in your magazine. Yours pleadingly,

Robert Banham, Feltwell, Thetford, Norfolk.

I'm not sure my Editor really wants a page for drawings, Robert, but since you have kindly sent us two of yours (with apologies to Ultimate and Quicksilva) — here they are in print . . .
LM





I must take a quick moment to say thank you to all those who have written in the past couple of weeks. The letters have piled up to such an extent that I just can't fit even a fraction of them in, but good letters will still find their way onto these pages as soon as possible, so forgive me if you were expecting to see yourself in print this month. Have patience and stay tuned! LM



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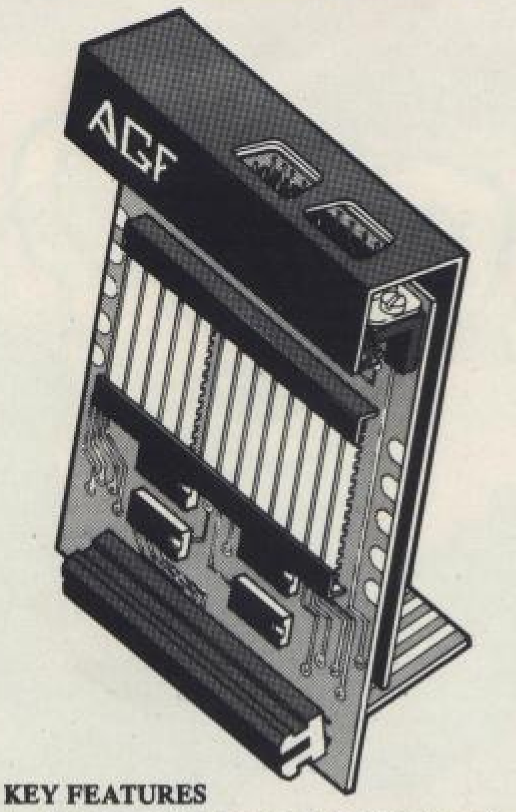
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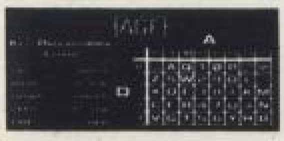


KEY FEATURES

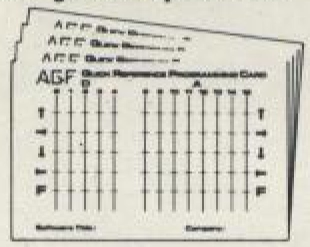
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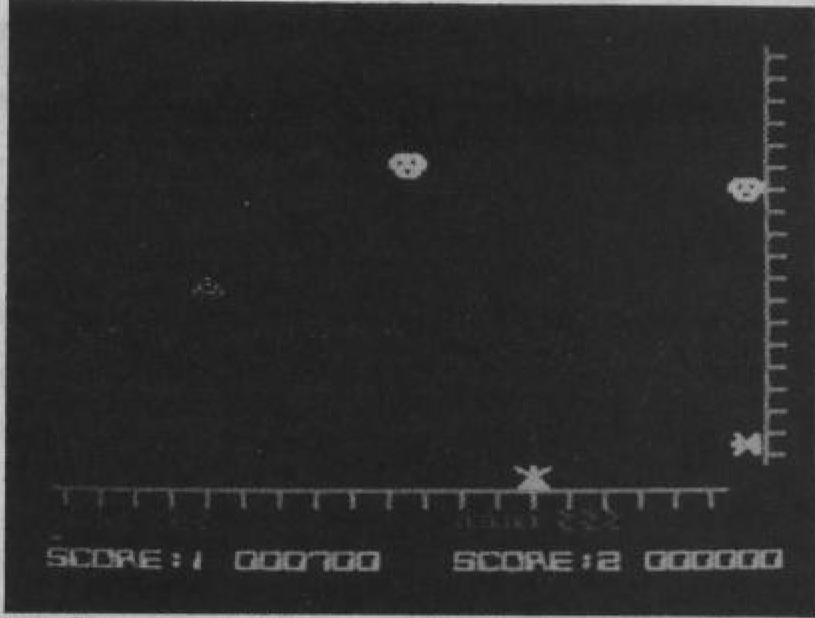
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imagine

..the name of the game

Lazer Zone

Producer: **Quicksilva/Salamander**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£6.95**
Language: **Machine code**
Author: **Jeff Minter (of Llamasoft)**



Laser Zone — insanely fast, pure arcade action shoot em up and across.

Laser Zone is an insanely fast shoot em up with a difference. This is more of a shoot em up 'n' across. Instead of the usual left/right moving laser base at the bottom of the screen you have, in addition, a vertical laser base on the right hand side of the screen as well. Both bases are controlled independently although there is only one fire control for both.

Because this is an exceptionally fast game, a training mode has been provided, which allows you to get the hang of firing without being attacked. It's a bit like one of those tricks where you have to pat the top of your head with one hand and rub your stomach at the same time with the other — not easy!

The assaults come in attack waves (a time-honoured tradition with aliens), and should any of the various aliens reach either laser base axis, they will simply crawl along until they reach a base and that's one life gone. Later assaults contain pods which form on the screen and stay there a short while. When these blow up, any laser base opposite will be destroyed. Some alien ships will swoop down and then sideways along an axis, and the only way to deal with them is to fire diagonally from the unthreatened laser whilst avoiding shooting yourself! Electro bolts may be fired along the cannon tracks to destroy landed aliens, but there are only three with another gained for each wave destroyed.

CRITICISM

'Firing diagonally takes quite a bit of practice before you get the hang of it, and I'm afraid you need to do it constantly! The graphics are fairly simple yet smooth and the game is a highly original one. It's highly addictive, and makes an excellent two-player 'co-operation' game. It's the originality and simplicity of idea which makes it an excellent game. I hope Jeff Minter does more software for the Spectrum, his games being in the main, very addictive.'

'For players who like shoot em ups and have become bored by the usual 'Galaxian' or 'Phoenix' format, this game should prove a winner. The very speed of play makes it difficult to master, before one even goes on to talk about controlling two different lasers at once. The keys are a bit of a handful, no doubt why the two-player working together facility is included. It obviously won't appeal to those who prefer a slower or more contemplative game, but it blew my mind!'

'This game offers lots of combinations for defending yourself, like the laser bases can 'wrap around' to escape landed aliens for a little longer while the other base tries to pick them off — but is there the time to think and act? The seqence between lives is perhaps a little too long, although after a few hours playing you become grateful for the break! If you like shoot em up games, this is triff.'

COMMENTS

Control keys: Q/W = left/right, 0/0 = up/down, SHIFT or SPACE = fire, X or M = electro bolts
Joystick: Kempston, Sinclair 2
Keyboard play: fast and responsive
Colour: reasonable
Graphics: good, although quite small
Sound: good
Skill levels: a massive 32!
Lives: 5
Features: individual or co-operative firing, 1 or 2 players
General rating: very good, highly addictive for shoot em up fans.

Use of computer	**72%**
Graphics	**68%**
Playability	**85%**
Getting started	**94%**
Addictive qualities	**90%**
Value for money	**75%**
Overall	**81%**

Pi-Balled

Producer: **Automata**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£6.00**
Language: **Machine code**
Author: **Jason Austin**

Automata's last effort, Pi-Eyed, was joky, a bit unplayable and a bit all over the place (like the befuddled Piman). This one is quite different and boasts some excellent graphics and a good arcade game of the type where you jump from square to square avoiding the nasties and changing the colours of the squares as you go.

The object is to help Burt change the Pyramid of Pi to the 'mystic' colour displayed at the top of the screen. Burt is being bothered by the belligerent Ball Brothers, Bobby and Billy. There's also Sid the Snake and the two Pixel Princes Col and Jas. There are 28 squares, or rather diamonds, in the pyramid. From the topmost square the monsters issue forth to do their various dastardly deeds. The Ball Brothers, looking like giant Smarties, zig zag down the pyramid and kill Burt off on contact. To lure the snake over the edge there are two magic discs either side onto which Burt may jump. He is then whisked to the top and must jump off again. But the top square is the most dangerous, since that's where the Ball Brothers come from. The discs may only be used once per pyramid.

Changing the squares' colour is done simply by hopping diagonally from one to the other. As the game progresses you may have to jump on a square several times to get it to change colour. Col may well come out and undo your work, whereas Jas may actually help. Confused? Try the game. And if you need some aid to concentration, flip the cassette over and play Lady Clair Sinclive's latest hit single which is modestly described as possibly the worst Reggae music ever commited — Beware of Balls!



Is it Col, or is it Jas? But not a Ball Brother in sight. And that's 'you', second line up.



CRITICISM

'I think this is the best ever game from Automata. The task must be completed without falling off the sides of the pyramid -unless he jumps aboard a magic flying disk, which can be useful in tight spots. The graphics are very colourful and super smooth. There's a great 'Bar' scene between games with the entire dreadful gang relaxing and Burt making fun of the Piman. Don't bother to listen to the B side!'

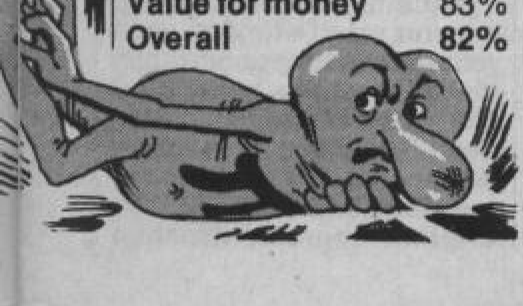
'Very frenetic and addictive. It takes some getting used to the controls which are down left, up left, down right, up right. You'll fall of the pyramid a few times at first. Once a rhythm has been established it's possible to zip along at a furious rate. The flipside hit single would never make Top of the Pops — they'd ban it!'

'*Pi-Balled* is definitely fun to play, but I don't think it's lasting appeal is that high. You quickly get used to the control keys and the patterns of attack from the Pimen and his friends. But the graphics are excellent, especially Burt when he's on one of the magic discs, slowly turning around and climbing through the sky to the top of the pyramid. Certainly unusual.'

COMMENTS

Control keys: P/Q = up right/left, L/A = down left/right
Joystick: Kempston
Keyboard play: very responsive
Colour: excellent
Graphics: excellent
Sound: poor (and that's the A side!)
Skill levels: gets harder
Lives: 3
Screens: 66
General rating: very good, unusual and reasonably addictive.

Use of computer	83%
Graphics	91%
Playability	84%
Getting started	74%
Addictive qualities	79%
Value for money	83%
Overall	82%



Denis Through The Drinking Glass

Producer: **Applications**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£5.50**
Language: **Machine code**

One of the odder games newly available at the 9th. ZX Microfair was this adventure offering from **Applications**. You take the part of the Prime Minister's husband, Denis Thatcher. The story starts off *in a cosy den at Number 10, safe from Maggie's eye, where you can plan your getaway, and drink the cellar dry.*

All the descriptions of locations are rendered in rhyming from like this, which makes for some very amusing and wry comments on political life in general. Your major problem is to find a drink, for this adventure is constructed so as to kill you off if you don't find one within ten moves, and reflects the general scenario that Denis must be got out of the house, avoid Maggie at all costs and finally reach the sanctuary of the Gravediggers Arms. If this sounds a little domestic, forget it. *Denis Through The Drinking Glass* is a tough assignment! Few adventurers will have encountered a monster as fearsome as the Iron Lady:

An icy blast,
An icy stare,
Abandon hope,
Maggie's there.
Sit you down,
Be a peach,
Listen to
The latest speech.

The game incorporates a number of features common to many 'modern' adventures, like the problem of ensuring that you are clothed. Exiting through the front door without having adjusted your clothing first will result in the friendly policeman handing you a copy of the *SUN* newspaper with your portrait fully nude on the front page — end of game! The HELP facility can be as capricious in its clues as any. At one point, when asked, it said, 'Get knotted'.

This turned out to be less than first thought when sheets were discovered under a bed, that could be knotted to act as a rope thrown through the window (mind you, that didn't work). On another occasion it merely replied, 'Balls!'. Again, this turned out to be more helpful than one might suppose and seemed to tie in with the existence of plusfours, golf clubs and the ever helpful policeman who has something for your leisure and pleasure — balls perhaps?

I must confess, at this point, that I have managed to explore some of Number 10 but not much more, it's going to take a lot longer! *But Denis Through The Drinking Glass* is a delightful game, so spending a great deal more time on it won't be any bother. The wit of the game and it's detective-like qualities combined with that damned 10 moves before a drink restriction make it thoroughly addictive and fun to play. If this is remotely near the truth then poor Denis must lead a miserable life. In search of that elusive gin bottle I noted the 'volume out of place' in the bookshelves very early on, but it only turned out to be Kropotkin's Memoirs (or is that a clue — I'll have to go back and try again)? Other points worth passing on are; don't try jumping out of the window — it gives the SUN another headline picture, 'Denis pays a flying visit to the garden', the painting by Churchhill looks interesting but the description wryly says, 'Nice canvas, pity about the paint', the cheese is dangerous, what's a PURDY (?), and Maggie can be lured away from her den and out of the house. Once out of the political confines of Number 10 there are obviously a lot of other famous souls to meet and avoid.

The game has been written with **Gilsoft's** excellent **QUILL** utility, a fact which is stated at the very start. 'I also see — A PLUG' it says under the acknowledgement. I wasted precious time trying to do something with that wretched plug before I realised it was a joke. Very funny. The response times are infinitesimal, in fact when you get into the rhythm of repeating moves you already know, it's possible to type in as fast and continuously as the keyboard will allow. Very worthwhile, entertaining and challenging. I can recommend Denis — even if Maggie can't.

COMMENTS

Graphics: text only, uses full width and height of screen
Sound: entry clicks
General rating: an excellent adventure and very reasonably priced.

Playability	85%
Getting started	70%
Addictive qualities	90%
Value for money	88%
Overall	83%

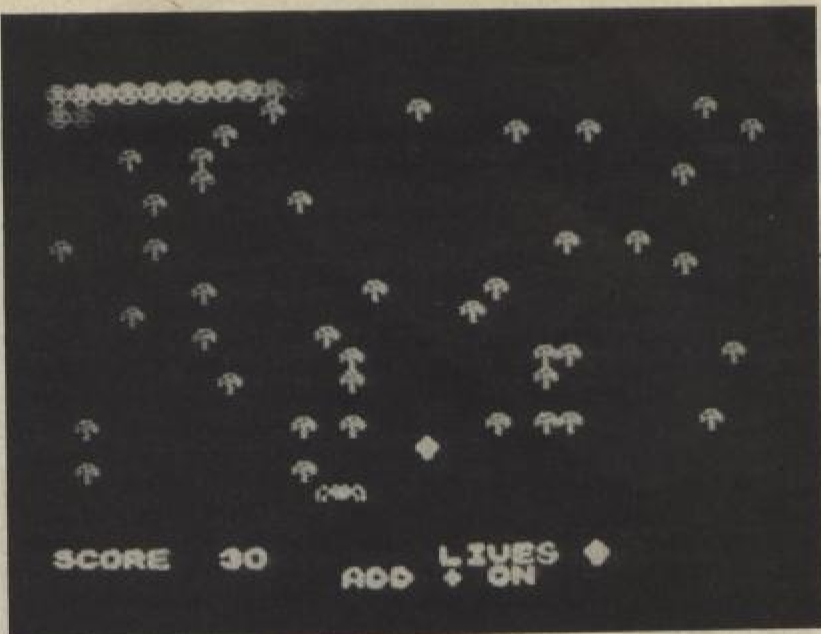


Millypede

Producer: **Add-On**
Memory required: **16K**
Retail price: **£5.00**
Language: **Machine code**

As the name suggests, this is the venerable 'Centipede' on the rampage again. All the usual features are present in this version from the centipede itself to the spider and another 'thing'. Red and green mushrooms which need only a single shot to destroy them, play their usual part and the monsterpede breaks up into segments when shot. 'You' can move left and right and upwards for about four character blocks.

The general presentation of this particular version is dreadful. The cassette inlay has been printed for the *Aquarius* and crudely overstuck with red *Spectrum* stickers, all the loading instructions are for the Aquarius inside and there are no instructions as to the control keys or joystick options (if there are any). The tape we received (from sales stock and not for review purposes) was badly overrecorded and the information only began some one and a half minutes into the tape.



The venerable creepie pops up again.

CRITICISM

'The version is quite a good one, but because I have now played it so many times I found it boring and unaddictive. There must be as many 'centipede' games for the Spectrum as a millipede has legs.'

'The graphics are fairly detailed and it looks like a reasonable copy of the original arcade game. A game like this must move and fire quickly, and this version lives up to those expectations.'

'I don't know when this version was really released, a long time ago I suspect, when it was reasonable. It's a simple game to program and it should look good without much trouble. *Millypede* certainly looks okay, but I think it's a bit much to put out Spectrum cassettes in Aquarius packaging. The game is out of date now, but for those who really still yearn for the good old days, I would say that there are better versions around than this.'

COMMENTS

Control keys: Q/W = left/right, E/R = down/up, T = fire and S to start, Not very good layout
Joystick option: none
Keyboard play: responsive and fast
Use of colour: good
Graphics: jerky, average
Sound: continuous, fair
Skill levels: 1
Lives: 3
General rating: old but fairly serviceable

Use of computer	45%
Graphics	56%
Playability	46%
Getting started	28%
Addictive qualities	45%
Value for money	50%
Overall	45%

Starblitz

Producer: **Softek**
Memory required: **16K**
Retail price: **£6.95**
Language: **Machine code**

This month's reviews include two major software houses releasing old arcade games, already well covered by existing Spectrum versions. The other is **Bug-Byte's** *Cavern Fighter*, and this one is **Softek's** *Starblitz* — a 'Defender' game. In both cases the results are excellent and go to show that a game need not be worn out if a really good improvement comes along.

In a 'Defender' game you control an attacking craft which travels over the surface of a planet avoiding the alien craft, some of which fire mines at you, others which grab humanoids from the ground. You score points for rescuing humans. The ultimate aim is to destroy an alien base in some versions, in others it's merely to survive. The landscape scrolls continuously as you fly along, and there is a radar screen at the top which shows your position, the visible screen area, and the position of aliens and humanoids.

As our reviewers discovered, *Starblitz* is an absolutely classic version.

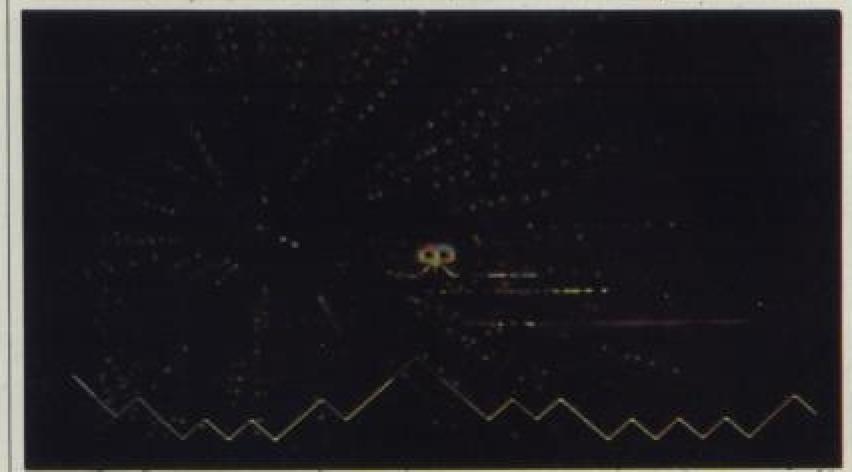
CRITICISM

'This is a classic looking version of 'Defender' with more colourful graphics than either Crystal's *Invasion of the Body Snatchas* or, indeed, the arcade original. The explosions are marvellous. It features all the original ingredients, has

highly responsive control keys and very good sound. The radar screen is very effective and appears to be highly accurate in as much as you can line up a shot and fire with every hope of hitting an alien that is just about to appear on the playing screen. I thought this was the best 'Defender' for the Spectrum yet seen, in fact the definitive one. It may be an old game, but for anyone new to Spectrum, it must be nice to kick off with games that are every bit as good as those on the arcades — and this one is.'

'Like a 'Scramble' type game, 'Defender' is one of those classic arcade games which require skill and concentration, has a simple idea and therefore can be very addictive if the version is playable. This one is very playable, and lovely to look at too. Certainly the most colourful, with very big graphics and smooth movement, and excellent sound. A very good version.'





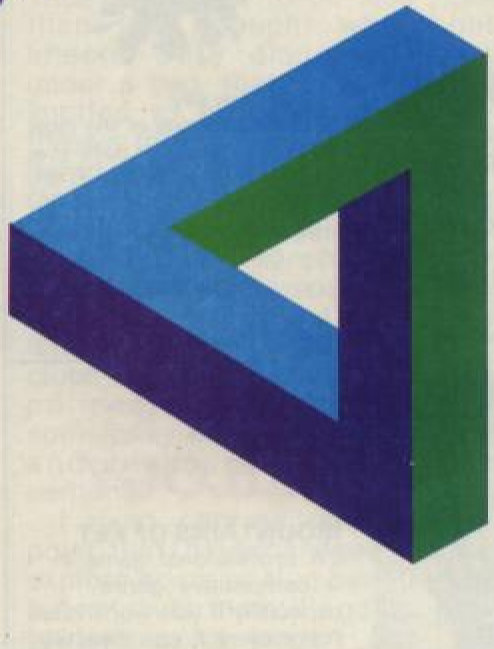
Above, the attack; below, a miscalculation.

'Quite simply, Starblitz is the best version of 'Defender' for the Spectrum I have ever seen. The graphics are large, smooth and colourful (great multi-coloured laser blasts). All the original features are there, smart bombs, bombers, aliens, pods etc. The game does require quite a few keys but these are well laid out. It's a pity there isn't a Kempston joystick facility — I'm sure they'll sell thousands more if there were. The sound is also good and your space fighter seems to scream 'Oh no!' when destroyed. This, coupled with the hi-res explosions (especially when you are hit), makes the game an extremely close copy of the arcade original. Definitely the best 'defender' yet (I almost searched for 10p between games)!

COMMENTS

Control keys: Q — T = up, CAPS — V = A — G = reverse direction, U & I = thrust, O & P = laser, B = smart bomb
Joystick: Fuller
Keyboard play: very responsive
Colour: very good
Graphics: excellent, nice big aliens
Sound: very good
Skill levels: 1
Lives: 3
General rating: an excellent version, highly addictive — is there any point anyone else doing a 'Defender' for the Spectrum?

Use of computer	**79%**
Graphics	**90%**
Playability	**95%**
Getting started	**90%**
Addictive qualities	**90%**
Value for money	**83%**
Overall	**88%**



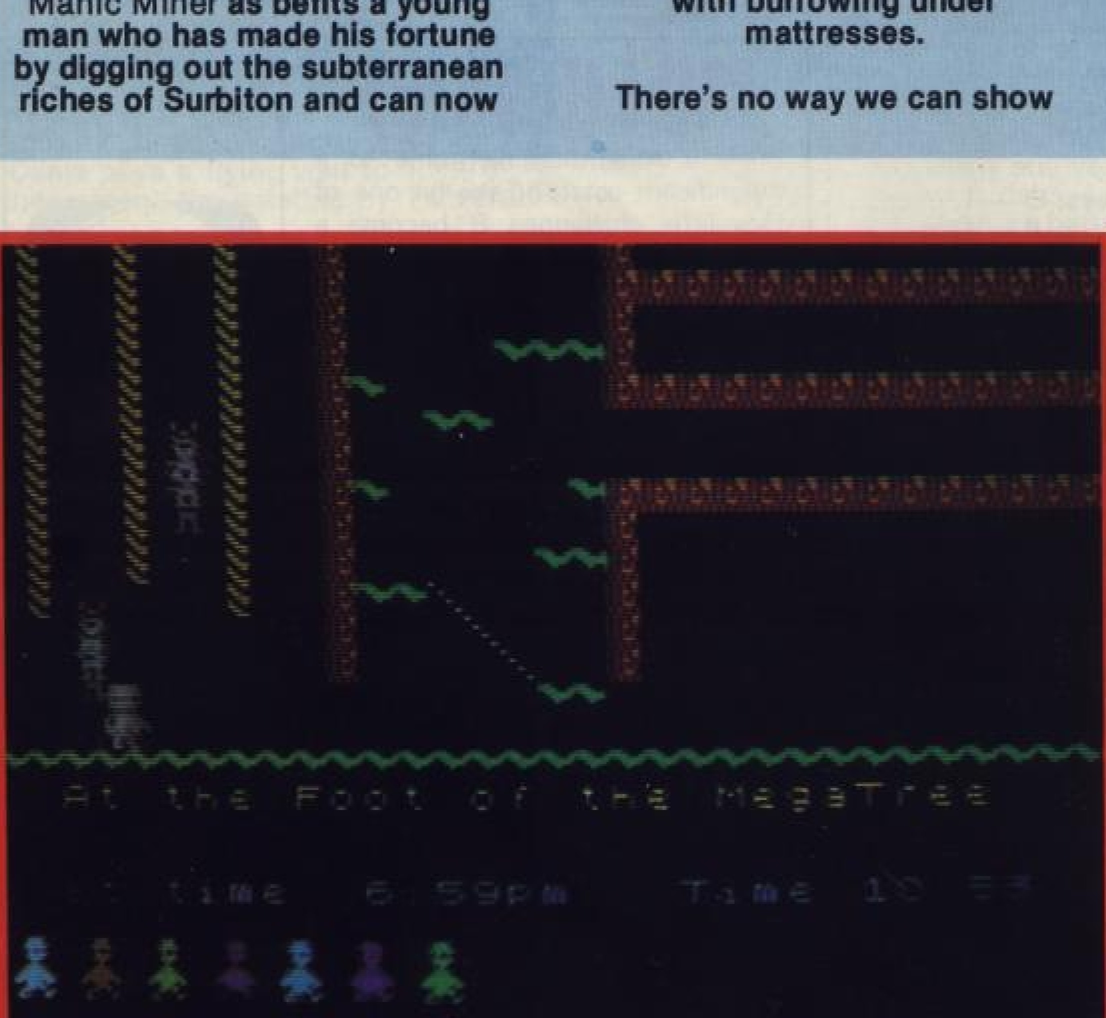
JET SET WILLY

At last, after months of hard work, the long-awaited sequel to MANIC MINER has arrived, and Miner Willy has emerged into the light of day from his sub-Surbiton diggings. Can there be any games playing Spectrum owner who doesn't know the name of JET SET WILLY?

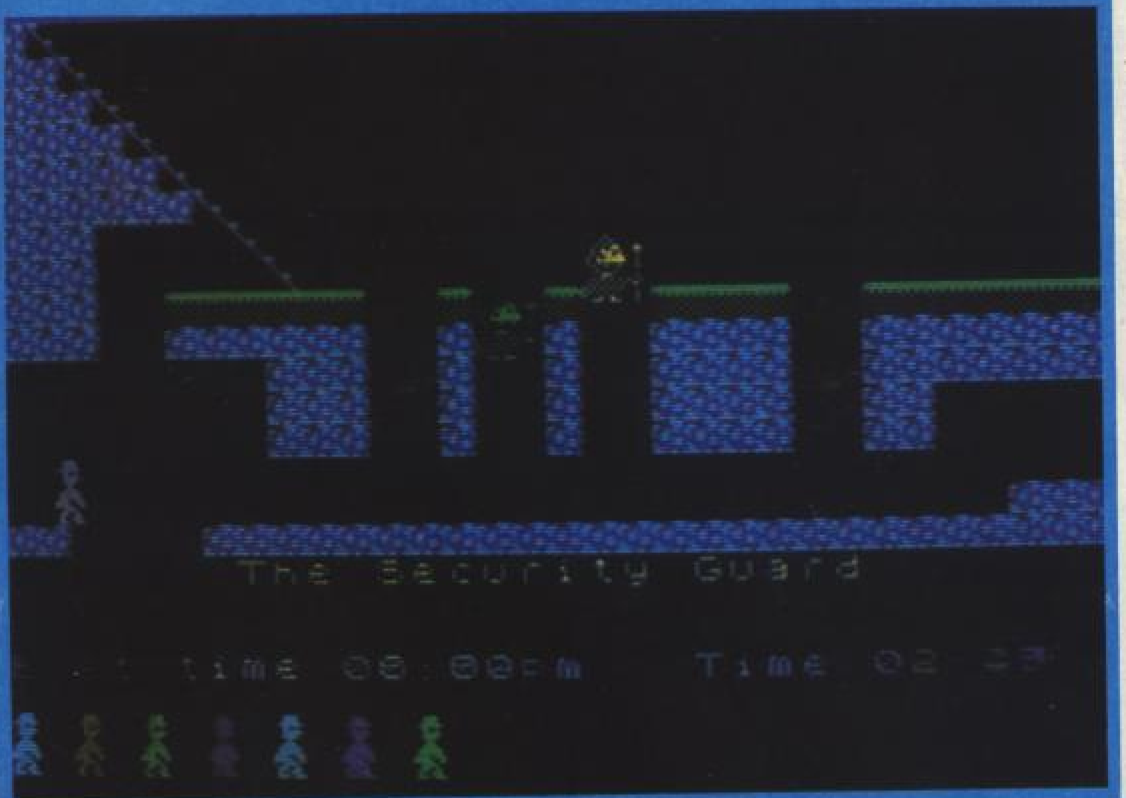
The familiar figure of Willy is now set in less claustrophobic surroundings than he was in Manic Miner as befits a young man who has made his fortune by digging out the subterranean riches of Surbiton and can now afford a gigantic mansion. But the numerous screens look no easier. Even a casual visit to the Off Licence for a bottle of something is fraught with hidden dangers (well, it may be set in Surbiton, but it's written in Liverpool!), which include over-anxious security guards and the biggest gaping pit you've ever had to swing across. Then there's the leaping guards, a deceptively quiet looking bridge, and all the problems associated with burrowing under mattresses.

There's no way we can show you all the screens or this magazine would begin to resemble a travel brochure, but then, the best way to travel is to do it yourself! We're confident that you'll be seeing the game very soon, especially as Jet Set Willy must be the most eagerly awaited program ever for any computer.

With something like £20,000 in the bank from Manic Miner royalties, Matthew (Manic) Smith can now sit back for a few more months and get rich all over again. But he's more likely to be back at his favourite Tandy



As we know, Matthew Smith hasn't had much time for sleep in the past three months, so it comes as no surprise to see that the game reflects an obsession with beds . . .



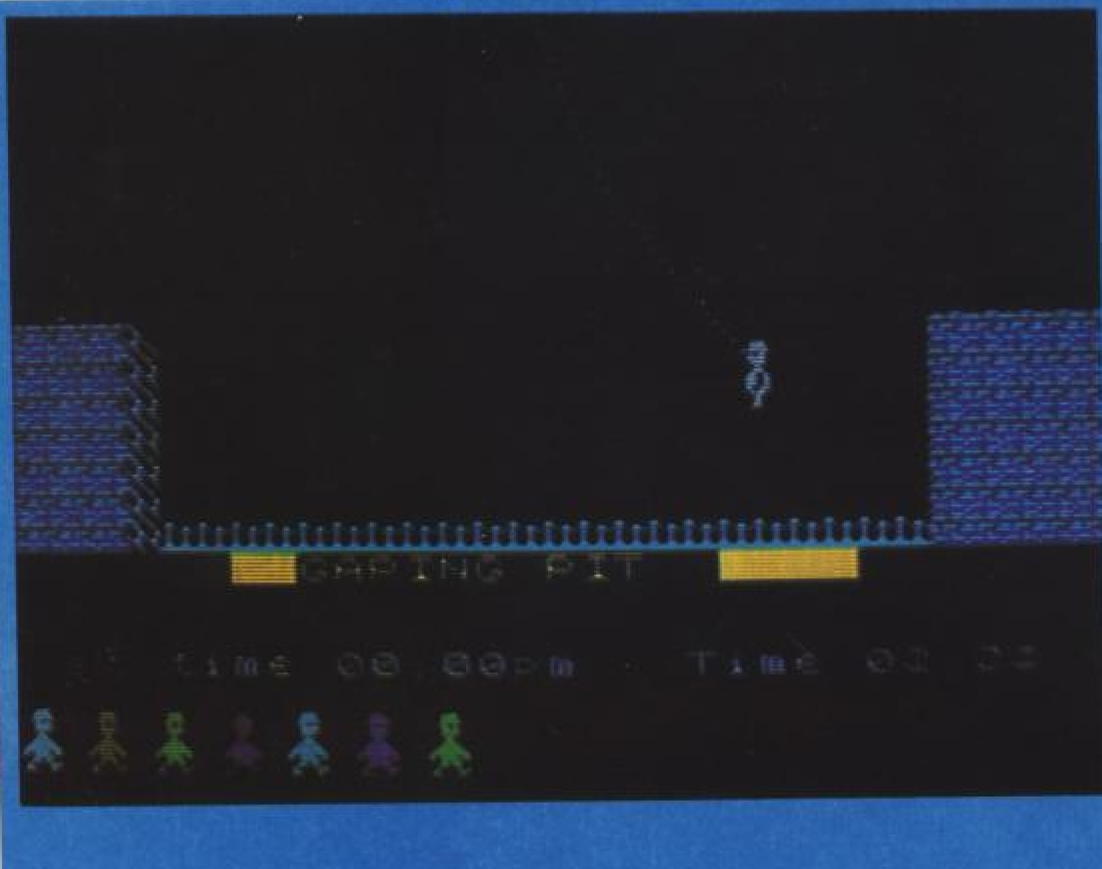
When you're worth a million a security guard is essential, but Willy's isn't all that nice — or secure . . .

. . . and suddenly there's more of them — the leaping security guards of Surbiton.

working on yet another follow up. It will be interesting to see whether Jet Set Willy has the staying power of its predecessor, but judging by the (illegal!) votes we have already received over the past two months on the CRASH HOTLINE for Jet Set Willy, it looks jet set for a long flight. (You may now start voting for it, by the way!)

With Matthew Smith himself at the control keys, we get a snatch preview of Willy's problems — it's not an easy life at the top!





With sublime indifference to personal safety, Willy casually sails over the Gaping Pit.

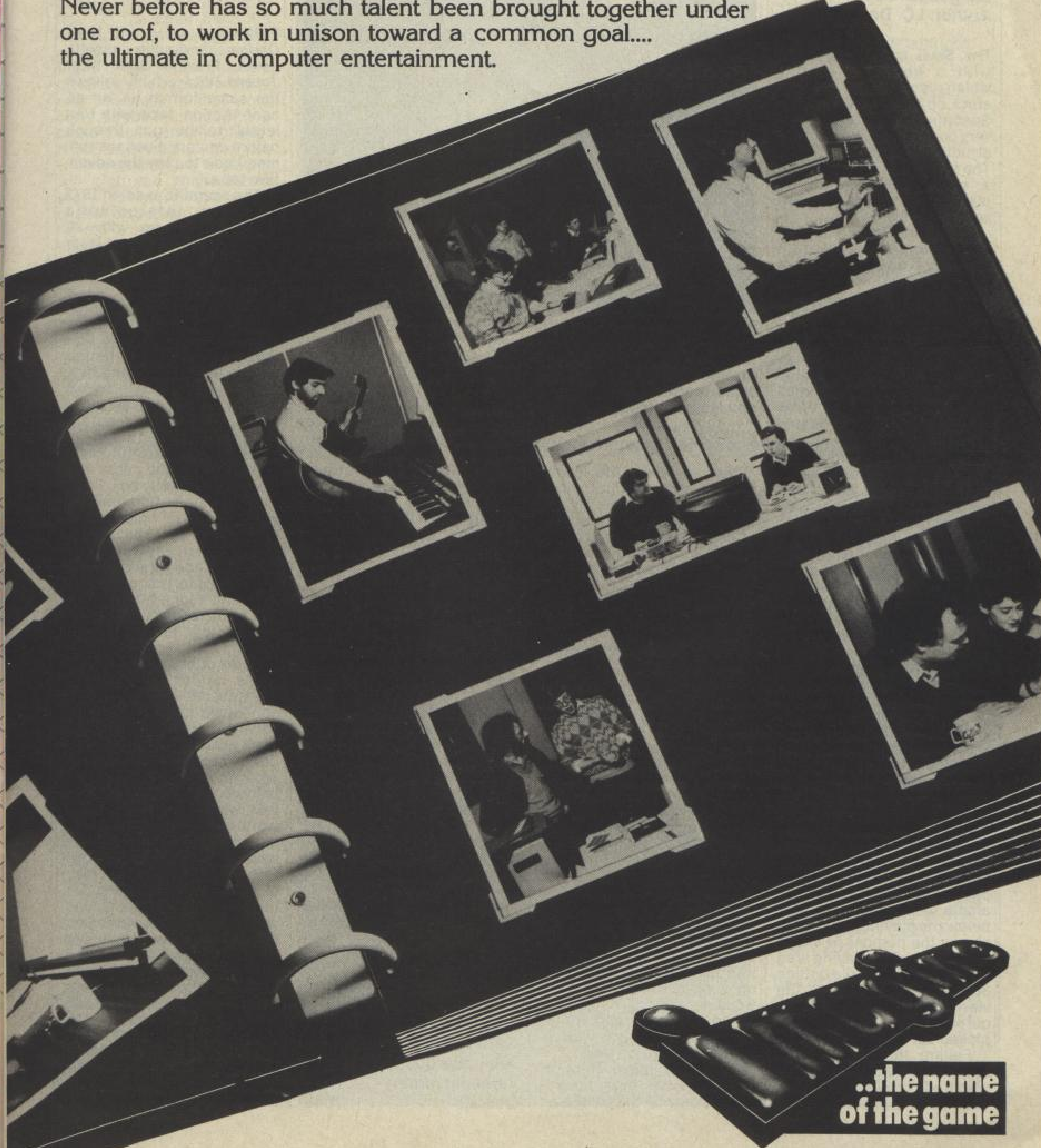

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Skull

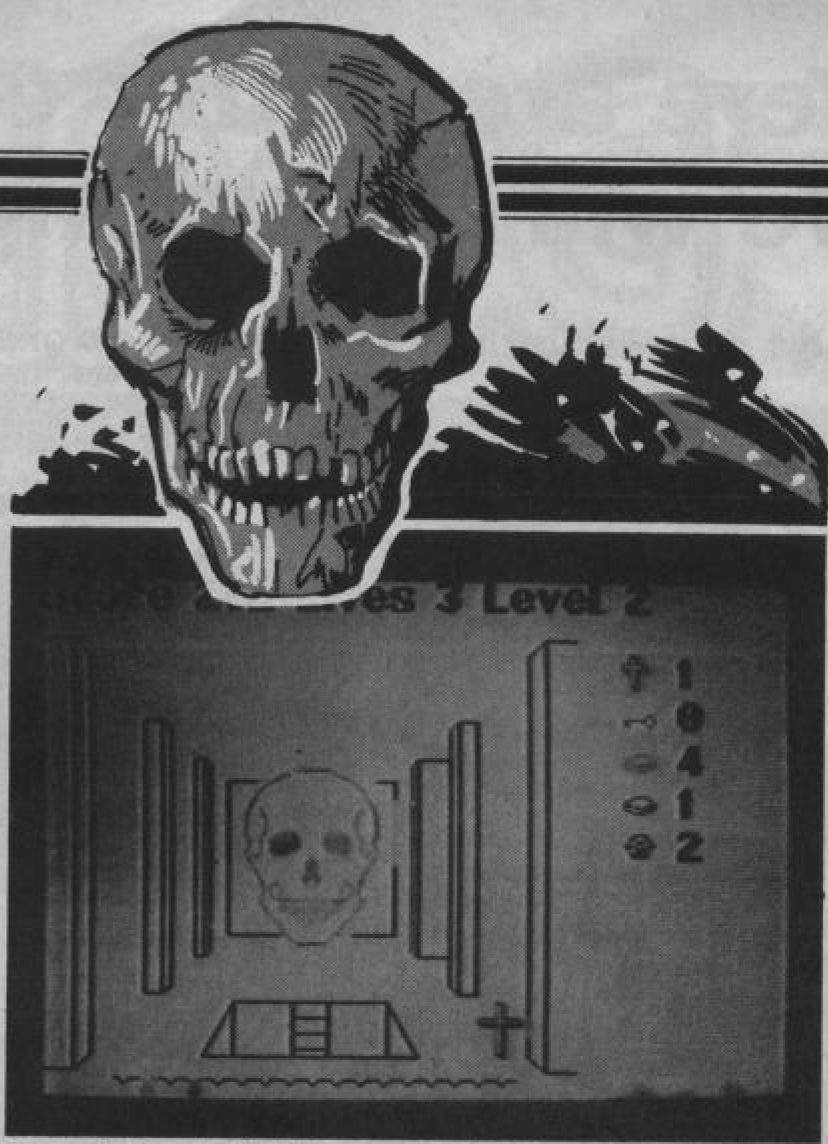
Producer: **Games Machine**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£5.95**
Language: **Machine code**
Author: **I.C. Docherty**

The Skull comes complete with a keyboard overlay which can be cut out and stuck on card to slip over the Spectrum's keyboard, and a very comprehensive set of instructions and objectives. The format is a 3D maze with a claimed 9999 levels of maze and a possible top score of 999,999.

You start at the 'top' and always work down. There are two ways of descending a level, the hard way — fall down a pitfall and lose a life, and the proper way — use a trapdoor with a ladder. Other obstacles in the maze are portcullises which are often triggered by your passage, and the wandering skulls which kill on sight. What makes life bearable in this nightmare place is all the treasure lying around. It consists of crosses, keys, bronze and gold coins and pairs of gems. If you pick up a cross you are allowed 15 seconds, during which time the skulls appear with pairs of gems for eyes and are vulnerable to your attack. The keys let you open portcullises, only one per key, but doing so costs you some points.

Treasure is picked up by occupying the square it sits in, and to the right of the playing area an inventory is kept. The cross flashes inversely during its last 5 seconds of useful life. Below the inventory a map appears with each new level, showing your location and that of obstacles, skulls and treasure. Unfortunately it only lasts for a few seconds, but only at the cost of some points accumulated. There is also a lucky charm bracelet below the playing area which shows the number of skulls in the maze. The playing area itself shows a simple outline 3D representation of the view ahead of you and coloured objects which may be picked up.

Falling through a pitfall results in a series of flashing coloured boxes indicating your fall, whereas using a ladder results in a downward moving ladder to appear, while the next maze is randomly generated.



Beware the looming Skull, its eyes may gleam, but its heart is cold.

CRITICISM

'As an idea, the game sounds easy at first, until you see the huge skulls which are chasing around after you. The graphics are good — detailed 3D with good use of colour — and the skulls are excellent. I thought this was the best maze game I've seen yet.'

'The use of colour is fairly good, but I was impressed by the speed of maze generation and the graphics of the skulls. The objective is straightforward — amass as many points as possible without losing a life, and I found it entertaining as a game, but it didn't have much lasting appeal for me. Directional movement is with the cursor keys, which isn't too bad as the pace is relatively slow, and there are others in use tood, so the overlay is very useful.'

The general presentation of this game is very good, nice instruction and hall of fame screens which split up into four sections and slide on or off at different angles. Because the 3D maze corridors are black and white, generations of each view is instantaneous, and it's possible to move through this maze at high speed, slowed only by the pitfalls or the trapdoors which have a 5 in 1 chance of opening up under you. The skulls are wonderful, sneakily sliding away behind walls, only to reappear behind you when you're not 'looking' for them. On the whole, the smoothest and cleverest maze game of its kind I have seen. I only wonder about the general appeal and addictiveness of such games — but if you like the type, buy it.'

COMMENTS

Control keys: cursors for direction, Map = 2, Open = 4
Joystick: Protek, AGF or cursor clip on
Keyboard play: responsive
Use of colour: good
Graphics: very smoothly generated 3D although simple in construction
Sound: fair
Skill levels: 1
Lives: 4
Screens: 9,999
Features: Save facility and 'merge' — hi-score save system
General rating: a good maze game, with mixed feelings about its addictivity.

Use of computer	65%
Graphics	69%
Playability	75%
Getting started	80%
Addictive qualities	60%
Value for money	70%
Overall	**70%**

Jokers Wild

Producer: **Phoenix**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£9.99**
Language: **Machine code**
Author: **Nic Ford**

Following on from their *Dodge City* double cassette game, **Phoenix** now offer *Jokers Wild*, which follows the same format, ie. an arcade 'Action' tape with four levels to be got through before you are given the running code to play the adventure tape.

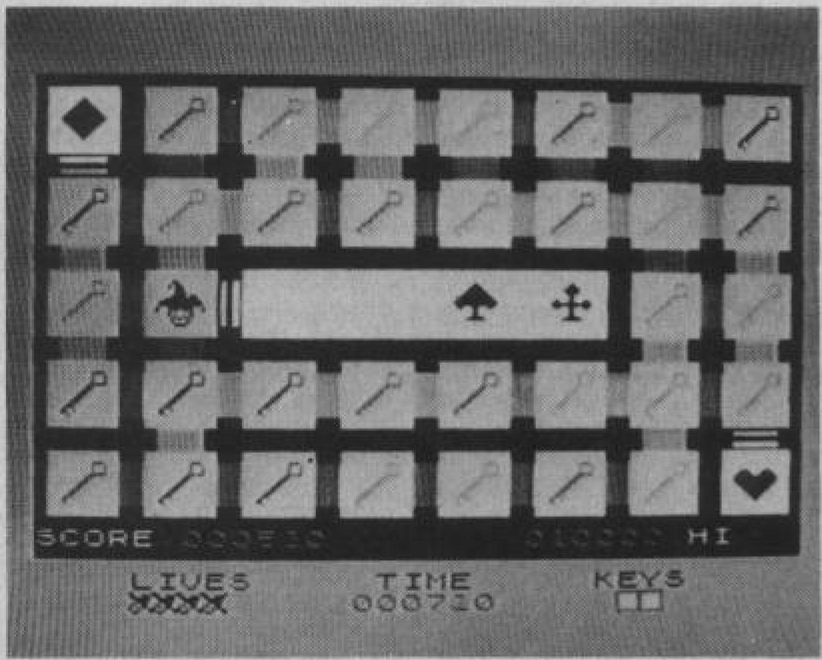
The scenario is set in 1972 and our intergalactic enemies (fed up with all those Tie Fighters and laser bases) are posing as a funfair. Before you imagine our intergalactic enemy as a hundred and fifty foot high Big Wheel with people going round in him, be aware that they are posing as funfair people and are placing hypnotic playing cards in 'bunko booths' to capture people's souls. 'You' and Captain Phoenix have been summoned back from the future to lock the hypnotic cards in a lead-lined security box. From there you must find the time vortex that is holding our enemies in the space time continuum of earth 1972.

The arcade tape presents a screen of forty squares surrounding a long black edged box in the centre. This latter is the lead-lined security area. The four corner squares contain four playing cards, one of each suit. All the squares (or rooms) are connected by doorways in a varying arrangement, so you can't just zip from one to the other. Those rooms without a playing card have various coloured keys in them, only a few with black ones. You can't enter a room with a playing card in it unless you have picked up a black key. Only one card at a time may be deposited in the vault. On the first level there is one chaser — an alien Knave, on the second level there are two, three on the third and four on the fourth. Between each level cleared you are given some clues which will be vital to you during the adventure part, and after the fourth level has been cleared you will be given the code without which the loaded adventure will not run.

CRITICISM

'The arcade game is quite original in concept, very simple, but because of its speed, quite difficult to get through. Your man, who looks like a Joker's head, moves extremely fast, which can make him a bit hard to control. On the other hand, he needs to move quickly because the chasers are frighteningly fast. It can be a bit unfair when you lose a life near the door to the vault, because you start by coming out of it again and the chaser is still where he caught you, which means he probably will grab you again. When there is more than one chaser on screen, this tends to make the game a bit unplayable.'

'The graphics are large and well detailed with a good use of colour. If the game sounds difficult, it is, and to make things worse you only have 30 seconds to get all four cards into the box! The adventure is a text-only. It begins outside the fair and you seem to have a few disguised enemies around!



Bunko booths galore in Jokers Wild.

A well put together package that will appeal to many people. It will probably take sometime before a player succeeds in extracting the code from the action game and this could well prove to be a disadvantage.'

'I found that *Jokers Wild* grew on me with the playing. It is a game that requires fiendishly fast reflexes, which fortunately the graphics cope with, or a lot of luck when you're up against three Knaves. However it does get a bit repetetive — the reward, of course, is to get the key to be able to play the adventure — I haven't yet. The one irritation was the instructions which flash alternately with the high score, making you wait between sentences. Definitely a game for speedy arcade addicts who also like adventures, otherwise it's a bit pricey.'

COMMENTS

Control keys: A/S left/right, K/M up/down
Joystick: none
Keyboard play: very fast and responsive
Colour: good
Graphics: large, well detailed and fast
Sound: well used — pity about the Death March
Skill levels: progressive difficulty
Lives: 5
General rating: good value if you can crack the code!

Use of computer	70%
Graphics	68%
Playability	68%
Getting started	71%
Addictive qualities	72%
Value for money	65%
Overall	**69%**

Bull Run

Producer: **Phipps Associates**
Memory required: **16K**
Retail price: **£5.95**
Language: **Machine code**
Author: **Barry Cornhill**

A bull has escaped in the streets of a Spanish town where you are holidaying. Being fearless, you offer to persuade it back into the arena by placing fences to divert it, and use yourself as bait to attract it. If you succeed the townsfolk will reward you.

The screen shows the town from above, but it more resembles a model of a some medieval village from a history book. Sixteen houses surround a central pond, with the arena at the top. The fences are kept down on the right. Depending on the ferocity of the bull chosen, the fences will only stand up to such mistreatment and collapse.

CRITICISM

'This is a desperately irritating program. The idea would be a good one, but selecting a level is a major business while you wait for the words to wend their way down the screen, then your man has to move from the bottom left of the screen to the bottom right to start collecting fences. This takes an age because of the dreadful graphics. Fences are collected by pressing the P key and dropped by pressing the D key — very obvious, but silly keys to use because they are far apart. You need to drop the fences quickly because the bull can still gore you while you are carrying one. It may sound like a good idea but the execution is not.'

'The graphics are small, not really animated and very jerky character movement. I found the game uninspiring, in fact I didn't enjoy it at all.'

'It says on the inlay that this is 100% machine code. If it is then I'm surprised. It doesn't look it. The graphics are primitive to say the least. It's also quite unplayable because the speed of the man is too slow compared to that of the bull which moves along in great jerks like a jumping spider. Not very nice.'

Another gory end in sight as the enraged trestle table from Spain attacks.



COMMENTS

Control keys: cursors for direction, P = pick, D = Drop
Joystick: AGF, Protek cursor clip on
Keyboard play: poor
Colour: below average
Graphics: very poor
Sound: unimaginative
Skill levels: 3
Lives: 1
General rating: poor, and surprising coming from this company who gave us The Forest, Greedy Gulch and Loony Zoo.

Use of computer	42%
Graphics	34%
Playability	37%
Getting started	48%
Addictive qualities	15%
Value for money	20%
Overall	33%

It's only Rock 'N' Roll/Tomb of Dracula

Producer: **K-Tel**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£6.95**
Language: **BASIC**

This manages to sound a little like the sort of dreary double bill playing at your local on a wet Sunday afternoon. Actually it's an adventure game and a strategy game. *It's only Rock 'N' Roll* follows the option menu strategy formula, the idea being to make it to the top of the music recording business. You have several main options like doing a tour, doing a concert, hiring a manager, making a record, buying a status symbol or writing a song for your group. The program's method of writing songs would have done David Bowie proud, with the cut-it-up-and-stick-it-down method that results in such gems as:

Why does she like puking
Shall I wipe your nose
So give me some
Da wop bop do

Kissing is like a dirty joke
Don't you phone her up
Don't do that, it's rude
Sing it baby

She never did like dribbling
Shall I tickle it
So lay down and be nice
Come on feel that beat

With songs like that you could be getting a contract from Virgin any day! (They'll probably put the hit single out on K-Tel later). Other elements of the game include your energy and happiness status, popularity and fan clubs. Since you start off with very little in the way of loot, concerts are restricted to busking and tours are way beyond your reach. It's also impossible to make a record unless you have a record contract — and getting one is not simple. Drugs probes and various other scandals can affect your popularity, and, as this is a real simulation, the more scandals you are caught up in, the more popular you become.

Tomb of Dracula is another matter altogether, a sort of graphics and text adventure where you enter the tomb — a series of character block-sized rooms, some empty, some with treasure and some with ghouls in them. Depending on what number of silver stakes you are carrying (you start with 7) you will either beat or be defeated by whatever ghoul you meet. Skill plays no part.

CRITICISM

'It's only Rock 'n' Roll manages to be fun at first, but the program (which takes ages to load) turns out to have a complete insufficiency of options to make it very interesting or very realistic. Thus it bores within minutes, or as soon as you realise that you are more in the hands of luck than skill. *The Tomb of Dracula* is frankly pathetic. The graphics representations are drawn in mosaics of character blocks and wouldn't frighten a two-year old. And there is little thrill in meeting 'A Zombie' which requires 15 silver stakes for its defeat. You are carrying 18. Oh good. Bye bye Zombie, what next? It's about as skilful and thrilling as being sick on the floor.'

Tomb of Dracula *is very boring — it's written in BASIC, the graphics are poor and I didn't like it.* Rock 'n' Roll *is better, but I am amazed that K-Tel would spend so much on TV ads and packaging for such programs. They should have spent more money on the games. There are better programs to be typed out of magazines.'*

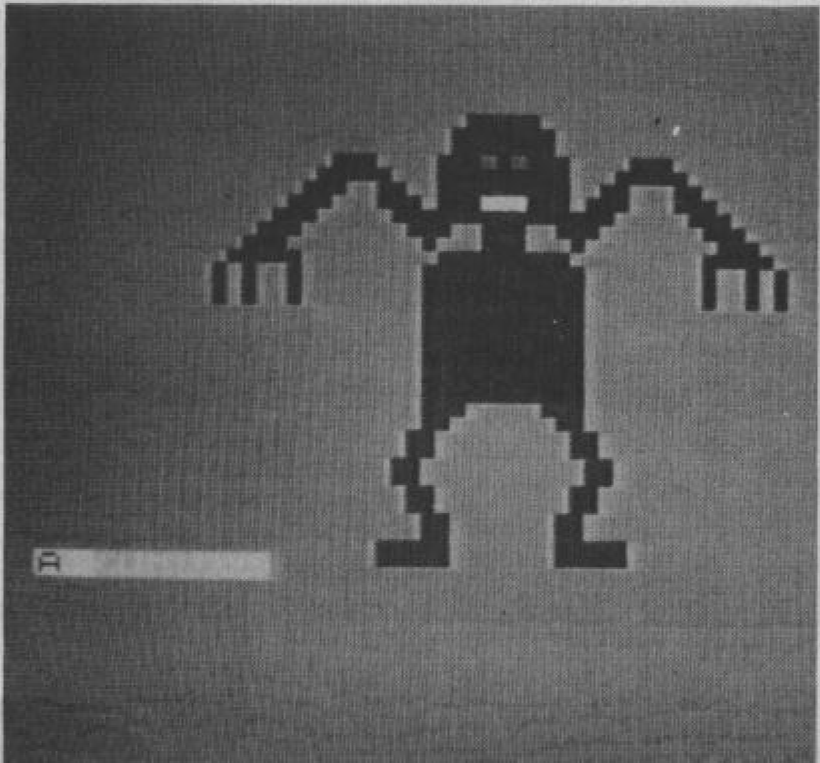
'Now and again you get to see the show you are putting on in *Rock 'n' Roll* — a drummer drumming, playing synths etc., which is quite good but I don't think it's worth buying it for that. It certainly isn't worth buying it for the *Tomb of Dracula.'*

COMMENTS

Use of colour: poor
Graphics: poor
Sound: reasonable tunes, but otherwise poor
Skill levels: 1
General rating: generally poor in quality and imagination and not a recommended buy

Use of computer	44%
Graphics	38%
Playability	40%
Getting started	54%
Addictive qualities	37%
Value for money	35%
Overall	41%

And our next object is a — ZOMBIE, a ZOMBIE . . .



Lords of Time

Producer: **Level 9 Computing**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£9.90**
Language: **Machine code**

Level 9 specialise in large, text-only adventures usually having over 200 individual locations. In *Lords of Time*, a band of evil Time Lords are plotting to alter the history of the world. You must travel back through time and collect nine crucial objects, each marked with the symbol of an hourglass. These will be later used to defeat the Time Lords.

The game starts and you find yourself in the comfort of your own living room. Suddenly there is a blinding flash and before you hangs a painting. There is also an hourglass on the mantlepiece. The painting depicts Old Father Time, and may come to life when examined. The hourglass is a valuable treasure and can be kept inside the grandfather clock to retain your points.

The only exit is North, and here stands a large, run down grandfather clock. It looks big enough to climb into, and perhaps it needs winding (could this be a clue)? Once inside the clock you can see huge cogs numbered one to nine, and a massive, stationary pendulum. The cogs are the key for travelling through to the many time zones. The idea is to leave the present and travel through many prominent times in the earth's history. Go back and confront angry cave people and ferocious dinosaurs. Go forward and get lost amongst the stars.

Your main objective is to attain a maximum score of 1,000 points. In order to achieve this, the crucial treasures marked with the hourglass symbol must be collected and put into a cauldron. Doing this will cast a spell and defeat the Time Lords.

I find it impossible to justly describe what a brilliant adventure *Lords of Time* really is. To me, all Level 9 adventures create a remarkable atmosphere because the descriptions sound so lifelike. This is where so many other adventures fail.

The game comes with a useful booklet containing some helpful clues. The instructions are clearly set out and explain exactly what must be achieved. The booklet is short in length and can therefore be easily read before diving into the adventure itself.

Lords of Time, like any interesting adventure, has a long lasting appeal (at least, until completed), but I think it will take at least a few weeks to figure this one out. It is generally a difficult game, but definitely worth the money.

Fraser Hubbard

Game of the Month

Night Gunner

Producer: **Digital Integration**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£6.95**
Language: **Machine code**
Author: **R.J. Swift**

Before going on to this new game from **Digital Integration**, we must first put something right from last month's review of their simulation, *Fighter Pilot*. One reviewer noted: *'Key control is a fraction slow, you have to keep a key pressed for results. . .'*

Dave Marshall of Digital Integration demonstrated to us that this remark was a little unfair. The reason being that the control keys were designed to simulate an aircraft's performance. In fact the control in *Fighter Pilot* is proportional, ie. the longer you keep a key pressed the more effect it has, moving, for instance, from a slow to a very fast bank or turn. So we were a little wrong to criticise this.

Night Gunner is a massive program, one which the inlay is at pains to point out is more of a game than a simulation, and which is based on a Second World War scenario. You are the gunner and bomb aimer whose aim is a good one — defend your plane against enemy attacks and destroy the ground targets in 30 different missions. Each mission comes in two parts, firstly the flight to the target, and then the actual bombing run. In the first part you get a cockpit view with your gun sights in front of you. Three types of target appear, barrage balloons, enemy fighter planes, and very large bombers which cross your flight path occasionally. Points are received for hitting any of these. The attacking fighter planes fly at you with their cannons blazing. Below the display area, the Captain reports time to target with a countdown figure. There is also a visual display of how many shells you have and a small aircraft shape for damage reports. A flashing indicator also tells you when you have been hit and the status symbol changes colour in areas acordingly.

Flight deck damage will result in random movement of the plane during ground attack missions — if it's destroyed you crash. If enough engines are destroyed before a bombing run, then the bombs will be automatically dropped, and if 3 or more engines go then you will crash (seems reasonable). Wings and tailplane may suffer damage without affecting performance, but if destroyed they will crash the plane. And if the gun turret is damaged it slows down your gun traverse, and if destroyed means that you can still fire but not aim.



An enemy bomber crosses our path and bandits are coming in fast, 10 o'clock high — Night Gunner takes aim, but there's no respite.

The ground attack missions are all different and alternate between high level bombing and low level rocket attacks. You have a limited number of bombs and rockets and the mission is terminated when the ammo is all used up. High level runs start off with static planes on the ground and the direction control will move the plane and therefore the sight as you pass over them. Another variation is moving tanks where deflection bombing techniques must be used to take into account the movement of the target. Low level runs are even more frought. You are given a maximum height of 400 feet and must then dive to fire the rockets without crashing into the ground. During these low level attacks flak is being fired at you, so you must weave the plane about to avoid it. Again, the 'HIT' indicator tells you when damage is occuring.

The producers say that *Night Gunner's* concept is based upon the Avro Lancaster four engined bomber although it is not intended as a simulation. Between missions there is a screen showing a very large graphic of the bomber crossing a city skyline and dropping bombs which turn into the letters, MISSION 1, or whatever mission you are about to play.

CRITICISM

'What a fabulous program. First impressions are that it's like *Zzoom*, but just much more so. The 3D effect of the attacking fighter planes in your cockpit view is marvellous. They come from little specks in the far distance right up, dodging, weaving, firing and finally dashing overhead, or just under your wing tips. Shooting them is a skilful task as you must use 'deflection' shooting to fire at the point where they will be by the time your shells reach them. The barrage ballons are tempting targets as they are big, but they're red herrings really as they take your mind off shooting down planes and thus saving yourself from damage. Marvellous graphics, very smooth and real 3D in effect — oh, and the sound's great too.'

'With 30 missions to get through, I'm going to be playing this one for a long time. So far skill level 1 (there are four) has proven to be too difficult after mission six, because each mission gets harder as well. If you've ever



The Lanc flies over to announce the next mission.

seen an old war movie with aerial dog fight sequences (the real ones) then you'll get some idea of what the cockpit view looks like when you're flying to the target. I would say that this game transcends addictivity.'

'The detail in *Night Gunner* is excellent. Even the effect of firing your cannons is accurately represented. If you fire and then move the sights, you can see the bullets converging outside the centre of the sight, or at the position where the sight was when you first fired. Low level rocket attacks are the very devil. Trying to dive without crashing, line up a ground target in the sights, avoid the flak and then gain height for the next dive takes all the concentration you've got. This is the first time I have seen a simulation turn into an arcade game — and it works!'

COMMENTS

Control keys: Top row = up, second row = left/right, third row = down, CAPS or SPACE = fire. The cursor keys may be selected through the joystick facility marked 'AGF', then use 0 to fire
Joystick: Sinclair 2, Kempston, AGF, Protek, cursor clip ons
Keyboard play: very responsive, your sight moves at a realistic speed
Colour: used very subtly, excellent
Graphics: excellent with 3D
Sound: excellent
Skill levels: 4 and with progressive difficulty
Lives: 3
Features: 1 or 2 player games with ability to select difficulty level for each player independently
General rating: a very clever game with plenty of scope and excellent value for money.

Use of computer	**96%**
Graphics	**93%**
Playability	**96%**
Getting started	**93%**
Addictive qualities	**78%**
Value for money	**89%**
Overall	**91%**

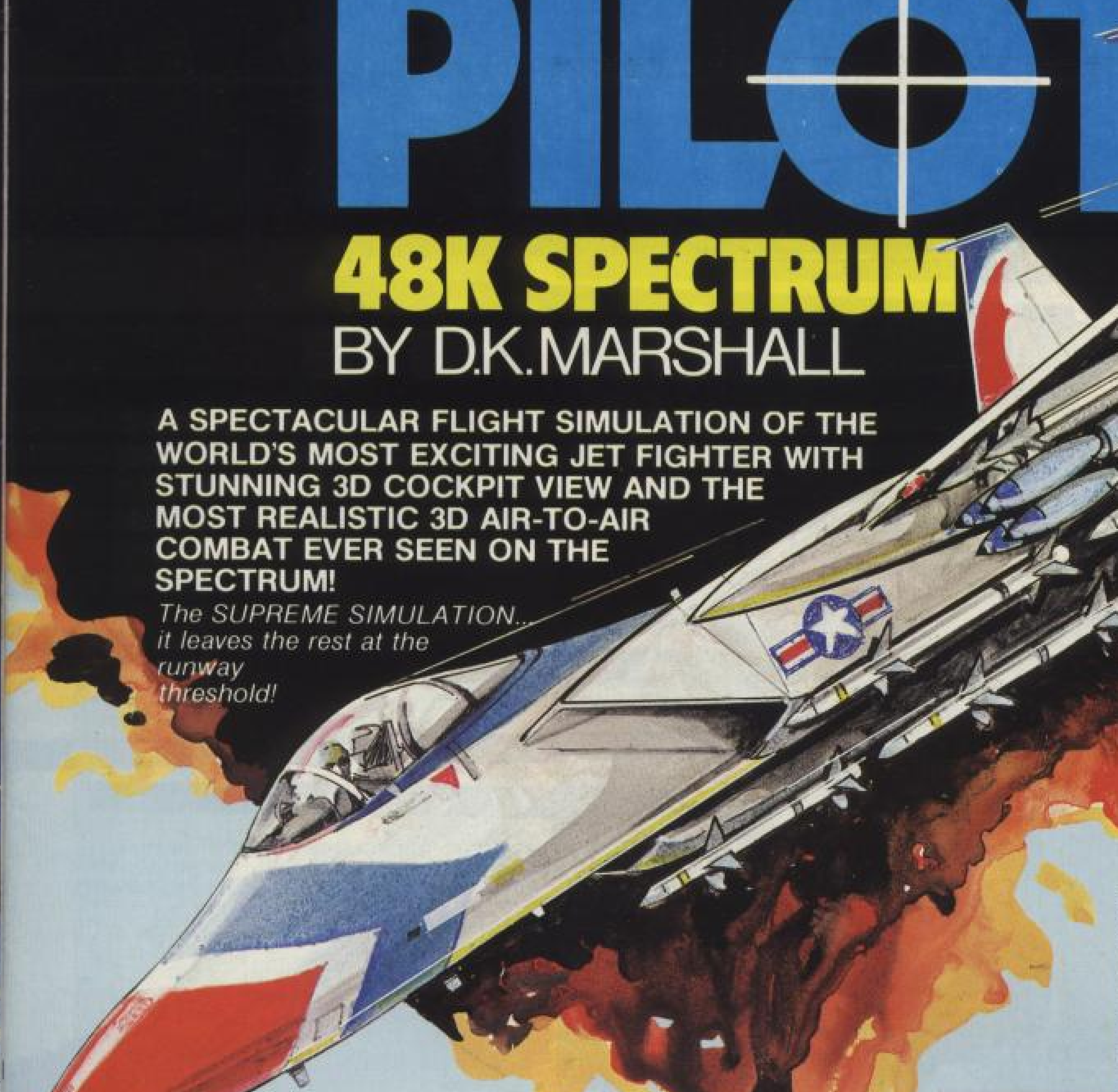

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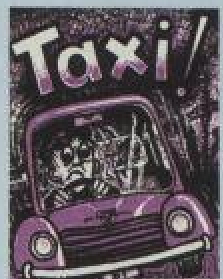
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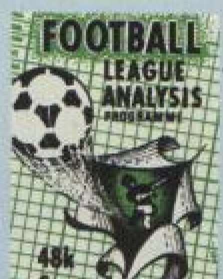
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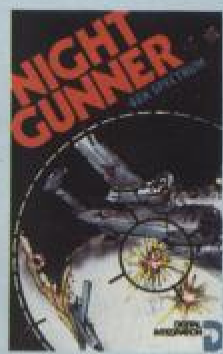
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SINCLAIR talks...

At the invitation of Sinclair Research, CRASH magazine took four reader/reviewers along to an afternoon interview with **Alison Maguire**. Alison is Sinclair's Software Manager, and as such takes care of evaluating software for publication. In the event, she was able to answer a wide number of questions which our readers put to her. The interview took place in the boardroom at Sinclair's London office in Motcomb Street on the 9th. of February.

We met our four reader/reviewers for lunch before the interview beside the swimming pool/restaurant of Chelsea's **Holiday Inn**. They were **Matthew** and **Scott** from Enfield, and **Fraser Hubbard** and his cousin **James** from Kent, aged between them 13 years to 15.

The questions uppermost on everyone's mind were about the new QL computer and the microdrives for the Spectrum. It was Fraser who kicked off with the $64,000 question...

...to CRASH

F: Do you know when the microdrives will be in the shops?

AM: Er, yes I do — **(silence, then laughs)**. I know when I think they will. The last date I heard may well not be right, it's not in my area. But I think it likely that they'll be on general release within a couple of months. At the last count we had got through our mail order list, now it's just a question of waiting for the time it takes for people to place orders. We have controlled the demand for it until we have got the supply reliable. We weren't satisfied with the product right at the start — the first people who bought microdrives were able to telephone the engineer who designed it and told him what was the matter with it. You can only do that with small numbers of people, and now I think it's an absolutely fantastic product. The cartridges are more reliable and I think we're ready to go. Okay, there has been a time lag, but I think it has been worthwhile.

Q: Do you think there will be software on microdrives?

AM: It's funny. It's a sort of chicken and egg situation. There are lots of things that will benefit from being on a microdrive cartridge but if you release something on microdrive, you're only going to sell it to people with microdrive. So I've been waiting, like everybody else, until they're on general release, and we'll be publishing our first microdrive software around about June, something like that.

I think it's worth saying that a lot of people have been complaining about the expense, but I think they're perhaps comparing it wrongly, thinking about microdrive software in the wrcng way. I don't think it's sensible to put a single game on a cartridge that has 85K storage. I would see the cartridges being exploited by the fact that they can hold so much, and I think good adventure programs could be released on a cartridge, and also languages.

Q: Are software houses actually thinking of writing or releasing software of that sort of size?

AM: Yes I think there certainly are. There are lots of games writing companies who are thinking 'big' at the moment, and also thinking about ROM cartridges. It's an area where people are continually trying to find something bigger, better, and more original. Who knows where it will end!

Q: In connection with ROM cartridges, how has the ZX Interface 2 done generally?

AM: Well, we've had a surprising number of people buying it just for the joystick interface, which surprised me a bit because there are other interfaces about.



The intrepid CRASH interview team in Sinclair's London board room. Left to right; Scott, Alison Maguire, Matthew, Roger Kean, Fraser Hubbard, James.



Q: Why were the particular keys used chosen?

AM: I've no idea.

Q: The main problem with those keys (6/7/8/9) (5/4/3/2) for a games player is that they are not ergonomic.

AM: I think you probably need to provide an alternative option. I've seen some games that allow you to choose your own key structure. But once you have chosen, I think you need to be able to store it — you don't want to do it every time. So you favour user-defined keys do you?

(There is general agreement between the interviewers on this point)

AM: Isn't it a bore having to redo the keys each time you play?

(A chorus of 'No' follows)

AM: That's interesting, in fact I think I'll even write that down. I don't know who's interviewing who here! I am interested in getting any feedback like that, I can.

Q: Will software houses be able to bring out software from the ROM cartridges?

AM: We are talking to a number of companies who want to produce software either themselves on ROM, or through us. If a company wants to bring out ROM software, and it's our ROM cartridge, then the only way to go about that at the moment, is to do a deal with us whereby we actually produce the program for them. And there are several large companies that we've been talking to with whom we are going to do that. Or they can produce a program that will fit into an 8K or 16K cartridge, send it to us, and we'll produce it. The ROM cartridge market hasn't really been tested yet — we brought out ten titles, six from Psion and four from Ultimate. But we will be releasing some more ROM titles, new ones that haven't been published in cassette form, say about May or June this year.

(At this point the most important question of the day could be held back no longer!) **Q: When will the QL be freely available?**

AM: *(laughs)* That's a good one! I can't really answer it. We're still going through stages of having pre-production machines coming out, and each lot going through a testing proceedure — they get better and better — then we start to ship, and you see how it goes with the first users — and then we start to ship in larger quantities. We are planning to produce half a million this year, and we are planning to start shipping next month.

Q: Is the QL mainly for business use or for games?

AM: We reckon that the QL is going to be one of the first machines that really sells into the home for useful things, not just for games.

Q: Yet you provide two joysticks ports.

AM: Well yes, we know people will want to play games on it, but it's not our primary interest at the moment. We want the QL to be seen as a very different sort of computer from the Spectrum although the Spectrum has been very important to us. We see the QL being bought by people in the home who actually want to use it to run the type of software that can advise them what to do in various aspects of their lives. It's going to be very important in the education field, possibly more important in the University market than in schools, but important in schools too. As far as games playing is concerned, it is capable of the most incredible games — but we know that will happen whatever we do. So, in the early months my main concern is to get compilers, languages and development things for it, so that people can write the software that they think will sell.

Q: There was a hope that the QL would make an appearance at the 10th. ZX Microfair. It was even mentioned on the showguide cover.

AM: It's an interesting question for us, whether we put the QL in exhibitions like the ZX Microfair.

Q: People have said, 'Couldn't Sinclair do a little better at the ZX Microfair than just six tables end to end.

AM: Well, we see the Microfairs as informal additions — events at which we get the chance to just keep in touch. We don't see them as major exhibitions.

Q: But there must have been thousands there, yet you say it isn't a major exhibition . . .

AM: Well we do go there. I don't know it would be appropriate for us to have an enormous, purpose-built stand at those sort of fairs. It would have the wrong sort of feel. We have a presence there, but it isn't a sort of great 'splashy' presence.

Q: As there is no cassette interface for the QL, does that mean that software houses will have immediate access to QL microdrive cartridges?

AM: Absolutely. Yes — unlimited numbers of microdrive cartridges, blank ones that is, are available.

Q: Have lots of QLs gone out to software houses yet?

AM: Not a lot, no. Some people have them, but at the moment we're still in the stage between launching the machine and having large scale production.

Q: Psion say they have been working on the business software for the QL pretty much for a year and have neglected the games side somewhat.

AM: That's right. People have been saying to me, 'Why aren't Psion producing games for you anymore? Have they moved onto something else?' In fact, at one point they had almost all their people involved on the QL software. But they are getting going on games again, and there are some in the pipeline both for the Spectrum and the QL.

(We then asked some questions on how Sinclair goes about choosing the programs which they put out under their own name)

AM: It's changed a bit actually over the last year. To begin with, we just got a lot of unsolicited programs in, and somebody looked at them. If we thought we wanted to publish them, we published them. It was fairly reactive — we didn't go out and look. That was mainly because Sinclair started off — and still is — primarily a hardware company. Software was a sort of sideline. It's become perhaps more important that we expected.

At the least level of involvement we still get people sending in finished programs, and we review quite a lot of these every week. I have a panel of schoolboys in Cambridge who review games. And we do still publish some of these, though fewer than we used to. We also initiate software now, by getting people to write things that we want to do, or at least we make a shopping list of what we need and go out and find it.

Q: Does your panel work in concert or in isolation?

AM: They work in isolation. Well, it's very informal as an arrangement because we can't have an enormous panel to test software — we haven't got the staff at Sinclair to organise that. We only have 50 people at Sinclair even now.

Q: Do you have a Spectrum?

AM: *(laughs)* Oh yes, certainly! I like playing with it and my daughters like playing with it.

Q: What's your favourite game?

AM: If I said what my favourite game was . . . !

Q: Well, do you like arcade or adventure?

AM: I like arcade games for a while, but I get bored quickly, which is why I put them out for review, because I'm not the right sort of person. I find adventures very difficult — easy ones are boring and difficult ones take up too much of my time.

Q: What about the Hobbit?

AM: Oh I love the Hobbit. I think that's about the only adventure I've really quite liked but mainly because I know the book and know all the characters.

Q: Do you see the Spectrum going on, or fading away?

AM: Well it's gathered momentum almost more than we could have expected. We expect sales in 84 to be higher than in 83 — 1985 is anybody's guess.

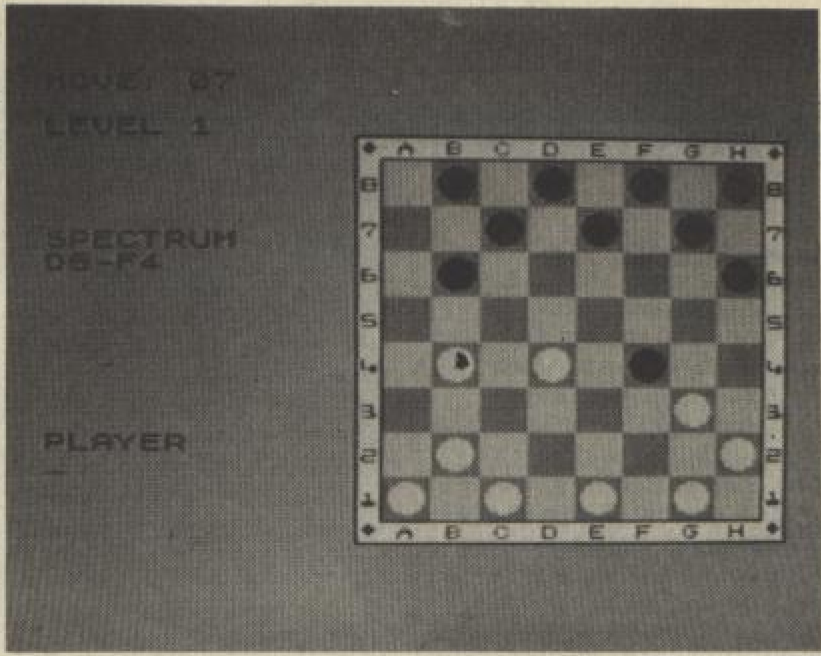
Q: Will you upgrade the Spectrum at all?

AM: We think we've got a pretty advanced computer in the QL, so it's a question of whether it's worth our while bringing out something that's in between the Spectrum and the QL. We continually look at that option. There are so many options open to us all the time, and we review them all the time, and that is a possibility.

(There was a general concensus that if the games market continues, Sinclair should upgrade the Spectrum, despite the number of computers in that area, because the ZX name is a potent force).

AM: It's certainly very possible that we will.

At which point we concluded our interview and trooped out into the wintry London sunshine to leave Alison Maguire to the rest of her busy day.



Draughts

Producer: **Oasis**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£4.95**
Language: **Machine code**

Draughts is a board-mind game that computer software houses seem to have largely ignored (there's the **C.P. Software** *ZX Draughts* of course). But **Oasis** have just released a series of board games, of which this is one. It's a perfectly standard Draughts game, played on the 64 square shess board between two players (in this case the computer is one of the players).

Moves are entered using the traditional algebraic formula, eg. A3-B4, and the player may choose to be black or white (white always goes first). Illegal moves are rejected, so for instance if your next move would let you capture one of the computer's pieces and you make some other move, it will be rejected, forcing you to take the piece.

There are levels of play, with 0 being the easiest and fastest. When the program has completed loading, this is the first thing you must select under the heading of 'Look Ahead'. What that means is that the computer will search the number of moves ahead corresponding with the selected level plus 1, so on level three it will search four moves ahead. The fastest game is on level 0 where the computer only searches its own move.

Pieces are automatically promoted upon reaching the opposing back file and may then move in either direction.

CRITICISM

'The computer is a very good opponent. It also has a capture command which means that if a sequence of captures is found it will follow that sequence. This makes the game harder. It has all the usual features expected of a good game, ie. it does not allow cheating and it is user-friendly except in play. Oasis seem to specialise in these 'mind' games and they do it rather well.'

'The graphics are very good. The board is nicely presented in yellow and green squares with the playing pieces in black and white. Not only does this mean that the colours are instantly identifiable (not always the case with computer board games) but they tend to be easy on the eye. The alpha-numeric notation is also very clearly presented as black on a yellow border. Another nice touch is that the piece about to be moved (on either side) flashes before and after doing so, so if you take your eyes away for a second you don't have to spend ages looking for the move if you missed it taking place. A very neat program.'

COMMENTS

Control keys: all alphanumeric keys from A to H and 1 to 8
Use of colour: excellent
Graphics: obviously simple, but effective
Sound: useful entry and key press beeps
Skill levels: 10
General rating: an excellent implementation of the classic board game at a very good price.

Graphics	60%
Playability	70%
Getting started	68%
Value for money	86%
Overall	71%

Invader Cube

Producer: **Oasis**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£4.95**
Language: **Basic & machine code**

This program has a slightly split personality in as much as it is called *Invader Cube* on the cassette inlay and *3D OXO* on the screen. Its schizophrenia doesn't in anyway affect the game itself which is full of neat touches, and, as you might guess, is a 3D noughts and crosses game.

It is played against the computer on four 4 x 4 grids which are stacked one above the other in perspective on the left of the screen. Each grid, referred to in the program as a **Plane,** is numbered from the top 1 to 4. Each grid is then numbered in **Rows** (across) and **Columns** (up and down) 1 to 4.

On the right of the screen, under the title (alter ego) *3D OXO,* are two sets of Invaders, ten of each in white and yellow, yours on top, the computer's underneath. Below that is the user-friendly prompt box. Although the program has a lot of BASIC in it, entries are made to the prompt only by typing in — you don't have to ENTER them. All that's required is a Y-es or a N-o. To start, you are asked whether you want to go first. This established, you are then asked to enter the number of the **Plane,** then the **Row,** and finally the **Column.** Each entry is verified by the computer asking 'O.K?' so you can change your maind if you want to. When the entry is complete, one of the little invader characters trundles over to the correct Plane and Row and slots itself into the Column. Then it's the computer's turn.

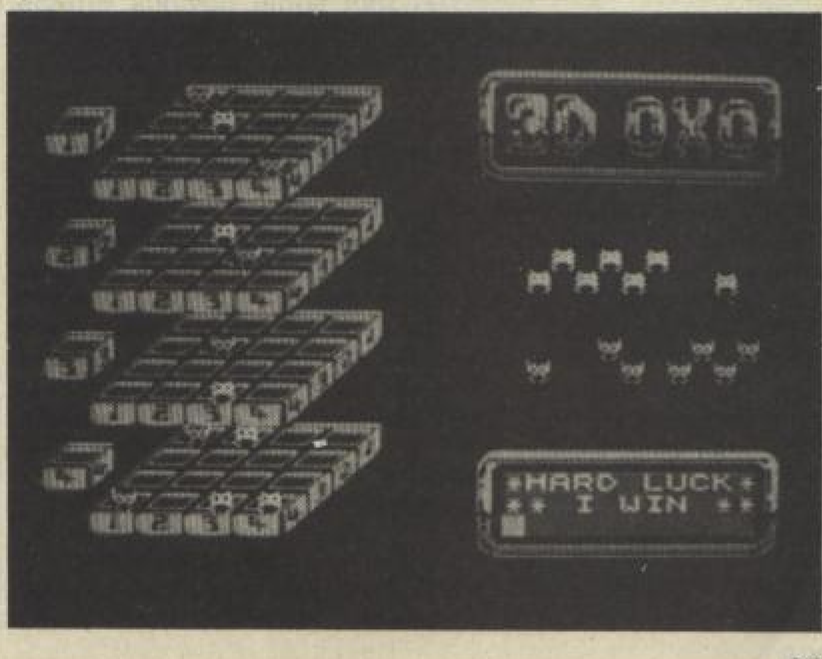
Any straight line wins horizontally, vertically or diagonally on one Plane or through the whole stack.

CRITICISM

'The clarity of the graphics make this the best 3D noughts and crosses game I have come across. The idea of having different coloured Invaders instead of boring old noughts and crosses is very neat and obviously appeals to children without insulting adult players. A nice touch is when a winning line is formed. The responsible Invaders all jiggle up and down triumphantly! It's such an easy program to use and it's price so attractive that the lack of any difficulty levels hardly matters at all — it's still a very hard game to win at.'

'The 3D display is rather good, especially considering the game is mostly BASIC. The computer is a good opponent but does tend to be slow to respond on occasions. I suppose this is the thinking man's Invaders game. Having Invaders on your side instead of shooting them certainly makes a change. A Lot of thought is required as the computer can pull a trick out of the bag

Space Invaders meet stock cubes.



just when you think you've got it sewed up.'

'If I had to choose between this game or *Arcturus* by Visions, it would be this one I would pick. Apart from the fact that it is 100% easier to understand what's going on, this one is £2 cheaper. The graphics work very well and the whole idea is appealing. You may have to wait a few seconds for the computer to make up its mind, but then, it has to wait much longer for you. Anyway, the pause gives you time to think — and you need it! I would recommend this game.'

COMMENTS

Control keys: Y, N, 1, 2, 3, 4
Use of colour: simple but effective
Graphics: games like this don't rely on fantastic graphics, but these are good
Sound: reasonable
General rating: good, playable and very good value for money.

Use of computer	63%
Graphics	60%
Playability	68%
Getting started	75%
Addictive qualities	69%
Value for money	80%
Overall	**69%**



Urban Upstart

Producer: **Richard Shepherd**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£6.50**
Language: **Basic + machine code**
Author: **P. Cooke**

Scarthorpe is the sort of town where even the dogs carry flick knives, where there's only one road in, and it's a one way street...

So says the introduction to this adventure game set in today's urban sprawl of unemployment. The object here isn't to get in to a place, but how on earth to get out of it. No one in their right mind would want to stay in Scarthorpe, that's for sure.

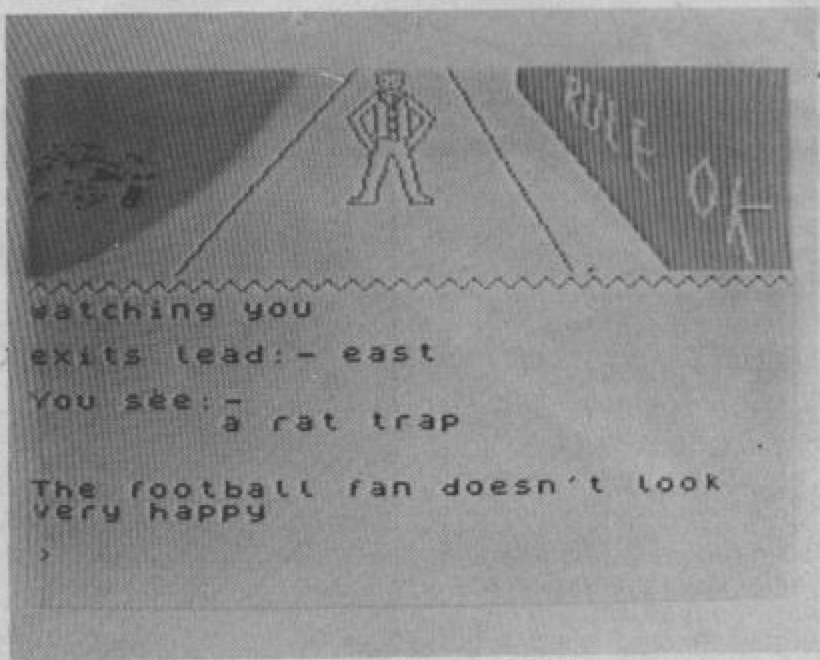
The screen is split into a third horizontal section at the top which carries the graphics, and a lower two-thirds which carries the text. This is all nicely presented with descriptions in black and commands in red. The locations are varied, the game starting off in a bedroom of what appears to be an 'alright' house, (although there is a store room with rubbish on the floor) and includes a number of streets like Grime Street and Cut Throat Alley, charming areas like the local football ground and the rubbish tips beside it, the local Nick and an appalling antiseptic hospital. The latter acts as a sort of Limbo between hell and hell!

As our reviewers found, half the charm (if that's quite the right word) of this game lies in its modern, urban setting.

CRITICISM

'The title screen sets the scene nastily enough, with its tumble down, graffiti-strewn walls, and background of smoky industrial mess. It is rather a good adventure game, and does make a change having police in Cut Throat Alley to having evil wizards in dungeons. The graphical representations of the locations are quite good and the game as a whole is well thought out. For example — when you start out, don't assume you are clothed, and don't drink the lager which has some obvious effects. The program also accepts, or at least understands, some very 'modern' language. I entered a few unprintable phrases of familiar frustration and amid siren wails, I was arrested and flung into prison on a charge of obscenity! I enjoyed playing it.'

'The only time to escape from Scarthorpe is in the middle of the night when it's all quiet — well, fairly quiet apart from the flick of knives. Everything's against you of course, including the police. The graphics are good in detail, although slowish to build up, and the response times aren't bad either. The vocabulary seems large and the computer does have a sense of humour (it would have to, living in Scarthorpe)!'



Rat traps and football hooligans in SCART-ORPE.

'The police station cell seems to be a regularly visited location in this game, and I must admit, that to date I haven't managed to get past the wretched desk sargeant, but perhaps he's only doing his job. Hospital is another favourite place. Either you get drunk or attacked by the irritable football fan, but whatever, Scarthorpe's overworked ambulance service is ready to whisk you off. Swearing is severely dealt with by a police car which swerves round the corner and arrests you (even inside the police station — which I thought was a bit steep), but I can't help feeling that if you're trapped in nowheresville, there's not much pleasure left in life apart from a good swear! I think this is the best game so far from Shepherd, despite the usual lengthy loading time.'

COMMENTS

Keyboard play: medium responsive, there's quite a lot of BASIC in the program, protected by an auto-destruct.
Use of colour: mixed opinions — poor and good
Graphics: varied, quite detailed, generally good
Sound: poor to average
General rating: above average

Use of computer	61%
Graphics	58%
Playability	65%
Getting started	65%
Addictive qualities	70%
Value for money	62%
Overall	**64%**

Ometron

Producer: **Software Projects**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£5.95**
Language: **Machine code**
Author: **Simon Munnery**

Despite the rather humourous artwork on the cassette inlay, *Ometron* is actually a deadly serious 3D cockpit type game in which ten waves of attackers try to land on the grid which you are defending. This is, of course, stuck out on a lonely uninhabited outpost of the empire. You are armed to the teeth with cannons in a revolving turret. Nothing must get past ...

The screen view shows in the top third the blue of deep space, filled with stars; the middle third contains the perspective lines of the grid on which you sit, and the lower third shows the edge of your turret, score lines and a graphic representation of which direction you are looking in.

The attackers, which include such diverse and terrifying space craft like Muon attack fighters, Tie Fighters, Coathangers, Sugar Cubes and Laserwing 235s (Oh no — not the 235s), all come at you from every direction of the eliptical plane. The Muons are on first, arrow shaped things. All the craft are in hollow 3D. Should one of them hit you, you lose a life. They are as likely to hit you from behind or the side, so it pays to have eyes in the back of your head — fortunately there is a flip key ...

CRITICISM

'The graphics work very smoothly, although they are not particularly colourful. What I liked was that this 3D cockpit type game moves very quickly. The enemy are frighteningly single-minded about wiping you off the face of the grid. But I also thought it wasn't all that addictive — not that it's too easy, it isn't at all — but somehow there didn't seem to be a sense of involvement in the situation. Getting the hang of flipping to shoot an alien that has just whipped past and will probably get you next time takes some practice, but once that's done, I felt it didn't go anywhere.'

'Ometron *is an excellent 3D game with very good graphics and I found it extremely addictive. The flip button is essential so that you can be ready for attackers from behind (craft disappearing away into space reappear behind you and vice versa). It also has quite reasonable and continuous sound and a useful demo mode. Very good.'*

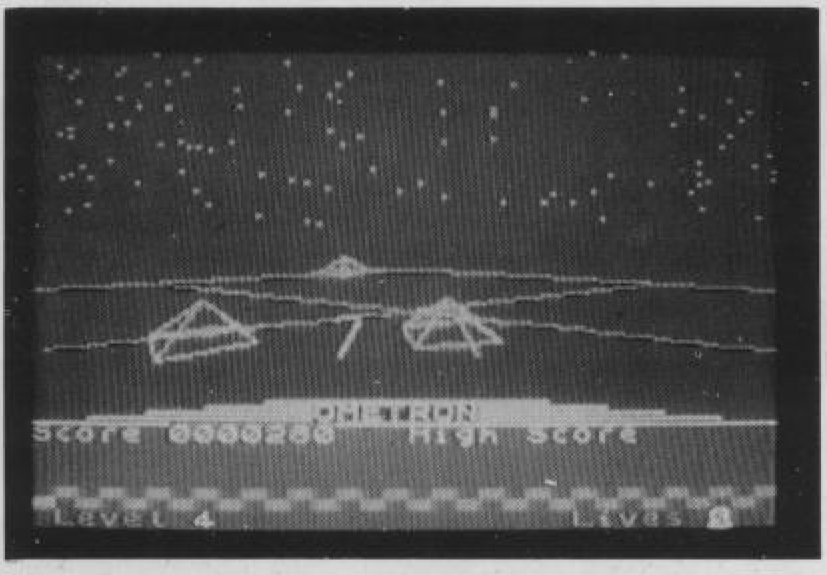
'Pretty exciting to play — it takes a lot of concentration with some timing skill when you are hard pressed. The one thing I thought the game lacked was a proper radar scanner. All too often I lost a life and wasn't even sure why, probably hit from the side.'

COMMENTS

C/V = rotate left/right, B = flip, SPACE or CAPS = fire
Joystick: none
Keyboard play: responsive
Use of colour: reasonable
Graphics: very good hollow 3D and smooth
Sound: continuous
Skill levels: 1
Lives: 3
Screens: 10 waves of attckers
General rating: good.

Use of computer	80%
Graphics	88%
Playability	72%
Getting started	75%
Addictive qualities	82%
Value for money	83%
Overall	**80%**

Flying pyramids slam up the Ometron grid.

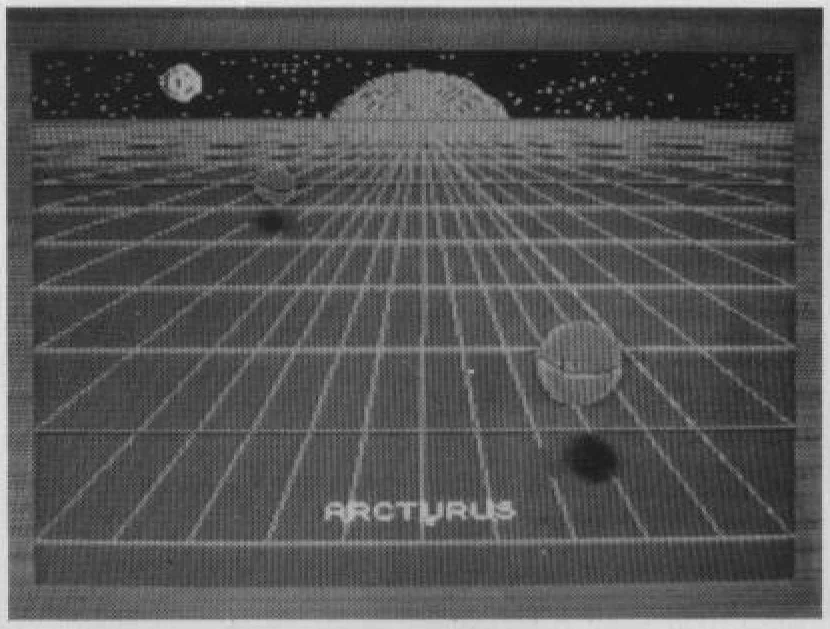


Arcturus

Producer: **Visions**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£6.95**
Language: **Machine code**

There have been a number of 3D Noughts and Crosses games for the Spectrum and now **Visions** have theirs out. The name of the program is justified by an extraordinarily long scenario, all about how super snails (well it is a sort of grid game) grew up aeons ago in a galaxy far far away and mutated into super-thinkers who hated war. Then they had a bit of bother with those war-like Vigans (you know the type, all mouth and nuclear weapons) and they ended up settling the business by making the Vigans do this puzzle thing and somehow that got handed down to earth. Hence the name of the game (oh, we forgot, the super snails were from Arcturus, hence the name of the game).

There is a very complex menu which must be used to play the game. This is displayed at the top and bottom right hand corners. A skill level from 0 to 9 may be selected, **Mode** allows you to select between defensive, attacking or neutral play, the sound may be on or off, printer on or off and the **Evaluation** on or off. The game itself is played on four



boards of 4 x 4 squares stacked one above the other in perspective with a number axis horizontally and a lettered axis vertically. Players may move a flashing cursor onto any unoccupied square and ENTER the move. It is possible to play one player versus the computer, player versus player or the computer versus the computer. A timer can be set to limit time on moves or games.

CRITICISM

'This is a very slick looking program. Others I have seen along similar lines tend to look very difficult to play, but the perspective stacks of four boards do make the 3D thinking process quite easy — well, quite may be an exaggeration. It's still a difficult game with tons of subtletly.'

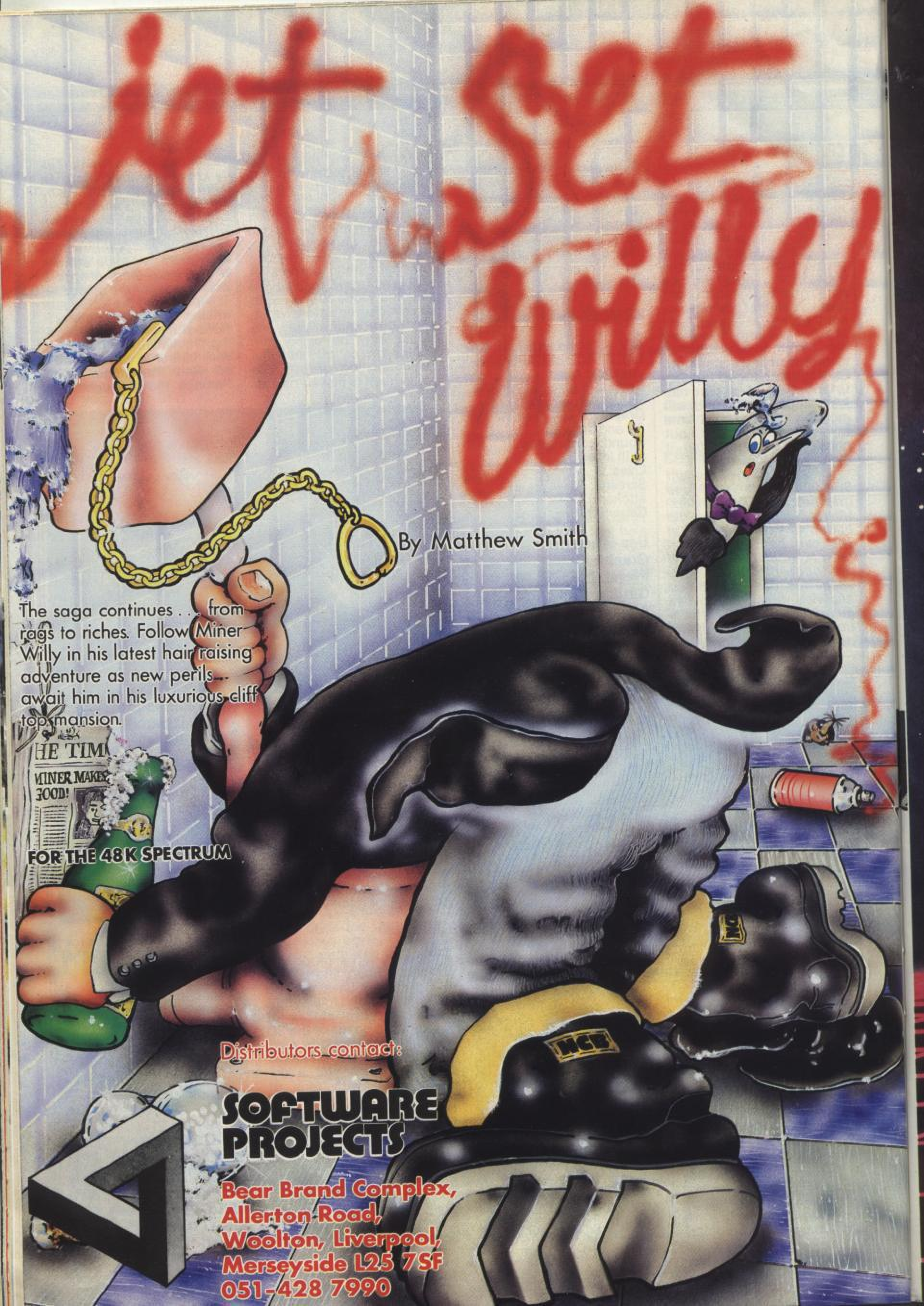
'If you enjoy puzzles you'll no doubt enjoy Arcturus. *The only serious problem I found with it was the difficulty of getting to play a game. There seem to be so many options and stages to go through to start one or get back for another and the inlay and on-screen instructions don't actually help. Also, I don't really know why they wrote an entire novel to explain why the game got its name. There are 22 pages of written history, all very interesting but not very relevant. I would have preferred to do without it and have them charge a pound less for the game.'*

'Apart from the confusion arising from all the instructions and getting a game going, it nowhere mentions that your cursor is actually moved with the cursor keys. Perhaps they thought that would be obvious, but it only adds to the general sense of confusion at the start. Once going, the very game idea is compelling and easy to play — very hard to win against the computer. Perhaps the flashing cursor block could have been a bit more obvious, it tends to disappear when it moves about.'

COMMENTS

Control keys: numerous for setting up options, cursors and ENTER for playing
Joystick: AGF, Protek, cursor clip on
Keyboard play: responsive
Colour: good
Graphics: good
Sound: useful
Skill levels: 9
General rating: very good for puzzle enthusiasts.

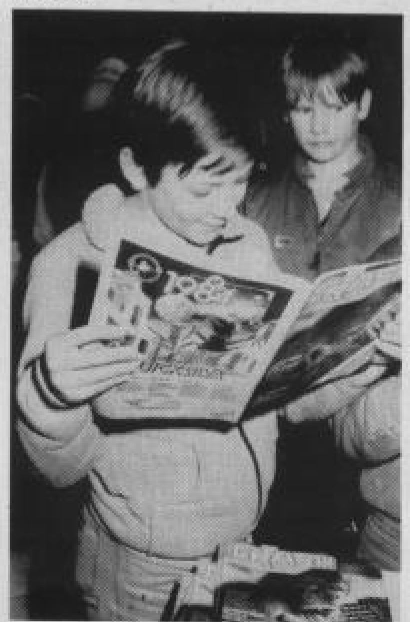
Use of computer	50%
Graphics	68%
Playability	65%
Getting started	45%
Addictive qualities	57%
Value for money	58%
Overall	**57%**


Jet Set Willy
By Matthew Smith
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Packed Crowds at the 10th. ZX Microfair

The 4th. February saw thousands queuing to get into the **ZX Microfair** at London's Ally Pally Pavilion, proving again that this jolly one-day micoaffair continues to be a big hit with Spectrum owners no matter what the glossy magazines say. *Personal Computer News* (Feb 18) reported that, 'People queued twice round the Pavilion . . . and shuffled patiently through the entrance, but once inside there was hardly any room to move and the temperature was tropical.'



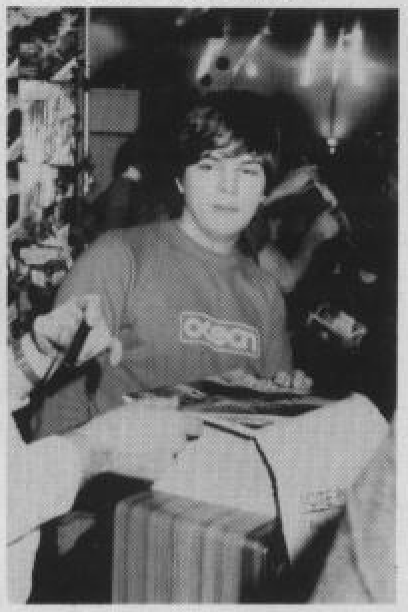
Young visitors to the ZX Microfair grab their copies of CRASH.

It **was** packed, the temperature was hardly tropical and the *PCN* reporter should perhaps have asked a few of the crowd whether they liked it that way or not. The crowds that formed around the **CRASH Magazine** stand certainly seemed enthusiastic. Over three hundred CRASH HOTLINE forms were filled out during the day and five thousand copies of CRASH issue two disappeared within four hours.

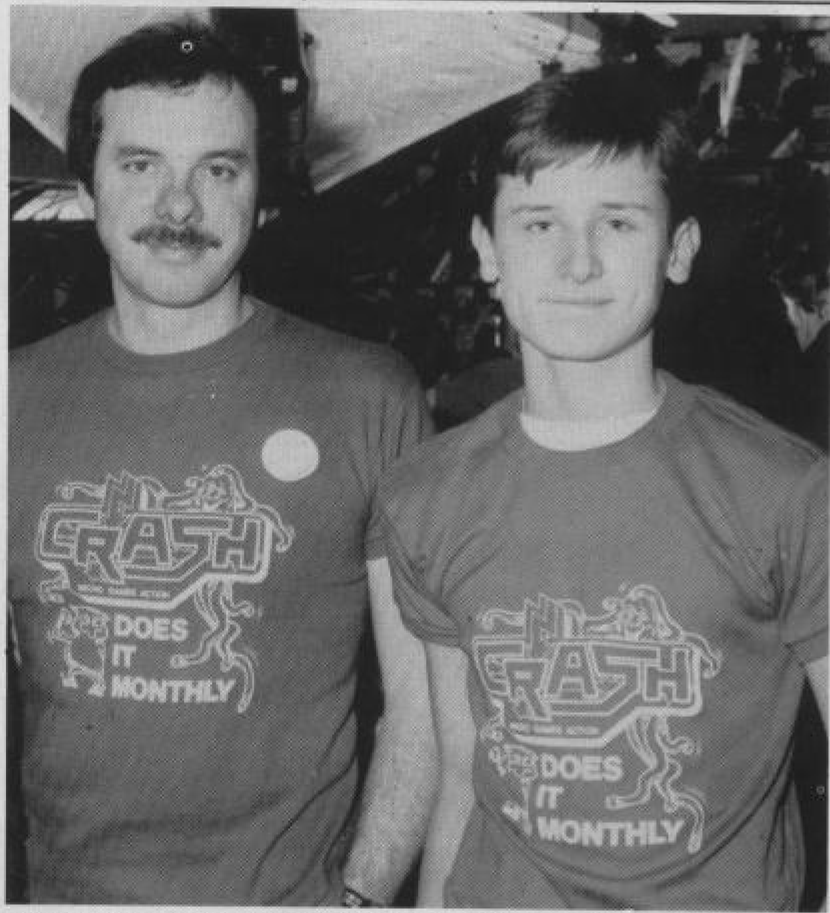
HUNCHBACK v SNOWMAN

Visitors to the CRASH stand were treated to the sight of **Ocean** programmer **Christian Urquhart** showing them how to play *Transversion* and *Hunchback*. Christian and his friend **Nick Pierpoint**, who was also at the stand, wrote *Transversion* which Ocean published late last year, and Christian wrote *Hunchback*. Whilst being slightly disapproving of our review for *Hunchback* (issue 2) he was delighted to be able to point out how high up the charts the game was.

Another visitor to the stand was **David Shea**, author of **Quicksilva's** *Frenzy* and of their latest release, *The Snowman*. David and Christian were soon engaged in a verbal battle regarding the various merits of their games, accompanied by supporters on either side from the crowd (the temperature was tropical). Aloof from all the arcade wars was our new adventurer, **Fraser Hubbard**. Nevertheless, he was able to explain how to get *Bugaboo* out of the gorge, which resulted in another heated argument as to which side of the gorge is the best way up. At the next ZX Microfair, CRASH will be having a boxing ring where contestants can hammer out the best way to win at computer games.



Boosting **Ocean's** sales of *Hunchback*, author **Christian Urquhart** on the CRASH stand at the ZX Microfair



After discussing some adventure reviews, Editor **Roger Kean** and reviewer **Frazer Hubbard** pose for the persistent camera.

ZX Photography by Nigel Hatton

STILL POPULAR

Despite the increase in crowds, the number of exhibitors was down on previous fairs, probably due to what was felt to be a poorer response at the two day fair before Christmas. In a way, it goes to show that one-day fairs are more appealing, both to exhibitors and visitors. But those who were there seemed to be having a very busy day. It was a tough fight to get near the **Digital Integration** stand, where

With the tropical temperature rising, **Chris Urquhart,** and **Nick Pierpoint** discuss program writing with **David Shea** at the CRASH stand.



Dave Marshall was sitting on the front flying his *Fighter Pilot* and demonstrating aiming skills in *Night Gunner*. **Gilsoft**, delighted by recent reactions to their adventure writing utility *The Quill*, had some cover artwork on show for their new series of adventures written with *The Quill* under the heading of *The Gold Series*. **Grant Design Ltd** were demonstrating their cursor key clip-on joysticks, while **Melbourne House** were bemoaning the fact that their first ever *H.U.R.G.* cassettes, due in at Heathrow that morning, had been delayed and were not available to demonstrate at the show. **Micromania** were shooting down aliens with the Stack Light Rifle (*Invasion Force*), as well as tackling ancient Egyptian monsters with *Tutankhamun*.

Softeach were also busy with their excellent **Custom Keypad Kit**. The wallet contains



ten plastic keyboard overlays and two self-adhesive transfer sheets. One is blank for you to write on your own details, the other is pre-printed with a host of useful items such as cursor arrows, left/right/up/down/laser /fire/bombs identifications, which can be stuck onto the blank overlays. Softeach are at **25 College Road, Reading, Berkshire RG6 1QE.**

Perhaps the most unusual item on show was for the ZX81, an English/Arab RAM pack. Marketed by Autoram of Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, this low cost item plugs into the ZX81 together with an ordinary RAM pack and converts Basic into an acceptable Arabic BASIC.

The most obviously missing item was the **QL** from Sinclair. There was a mockup on show, which didn't ao anything except cause disappointment.

Going back to *PCN* for a moment, they make a suggestion that it might be time to move the ZX Microfair for the crowd's sake. Undoubtedly true. It's about time Birmingham and Manchester and Glasgow also get their own ZX Microfair, which we are sure would prove as popular in those cities as it has done and continues to do in London.

ZIGGY FACES NEW CHALLENGE

News from software house **Fantasy suggests that their famed super-hero, the indomitable Ziggy of** *Pyramid* and *Doomsday Castle*, is to face a serious challenge to his status. For in April Fantasy are releasing their newest Spectrum game called *Beaky and the Egg Snatchers*. At the time of writing, detailed plans for the game's contents are still under wraps, but Fantasy's **Paul Dyer** tells me that Beaky's main task is to collect eggs and then guard them from the egg snatchers. They have gone to town on the animation which features a bird with 120 different frames to make up its movements. The game will be released on Commodore 64 and 48K Spectrum cassettes, the Spectrum version being £6.50

COKE POWER FOR IMAGINE PROGRAMMERS

Imagine have revealed the secret fuel that keeps four top programmers going for hours at a stretch — junk food.

Eugene Evans, Mike Glover, Ian Weatherburn and **John Gibson** have been stocking up on cans of Coke — they buy them by the case — and toasties from the local take-away to keep them going through a marathon three-month session in which they have been locked away with the brief to produce their biggest and best games yet for the 48K Spectrum and Commodore 64.

Eugene and Mike are working on the 64 game, and Ian and John on the Spectrum game. Imagine say that they have drafted in full-time computer musicians and artists to help with the sound and graphics for the games. The Guild of recognised and Original Programmers and Editors/Assemblers (**GROPE** for short) will probably have something to say about this enforced imprisonment on a diet of junk food, but whether it's the cuisine or the sound of all those computer musicians tuning up their keyboards, there have been widespread rumours recently that Eugene Evans had left Imagine. The programmer himself was coy on the subject, but the spokesperson for Imagine told us, 'He was still there on Friday.' Judging by the photograph, Imagine should send them all home for a good bath — that scratching can't be good for the bytes. The games are *Bandersnatch* for the 48K Spectrum and *Psyclapse* on the Commodore.

FLOPPY DISK SYSTEM FOR THE SPECTRUM

Morex Peripherals Ltd have launched a **Floppy Disk System** for the Spectrum computer. It offers double density storage of 200K to 3200K and a Sinclair Basic compatible operating system. The system includes a Morex Peripherals double density floppy disk interface, one or more disk drives, interconnecting cables, instruction manual, Spectrum disk operating system (on a floppy diskette), *Masterfile*, the disk version of Campbell Systems's Database program, *Tasword Two*, the disk version of Tasman's word-processor, and *Omnicalc*, Microsphere's spreadsheet program for the Spectrum in disk form. The programs are all compatible the Morex Centronics/RS 232 Interface.

The system offers access to storage at a read and write rate of 250,000 bits per second. Up to four disk drives can be connected to the interface and 40 track or 80 track, single or double-sided can be mixed. Prices have yet to be established but are envisaged as being in the £260 to £1300 range depending on the complexity of the system chosen. Morex Perihperals Ltd are at **Dept. MF, 172b Kings Road, Reading, Berkshire RG1 4EJ.**

From left: Eugene Evans, Mike Glover, Ian Weatherburn and John Gibson.





Rod Cousens (fresh from Las Vegas) and Mark Eyles take a relaxed view of their new releases at the press conference.

SNOWMAN FOR QUICKSILVA

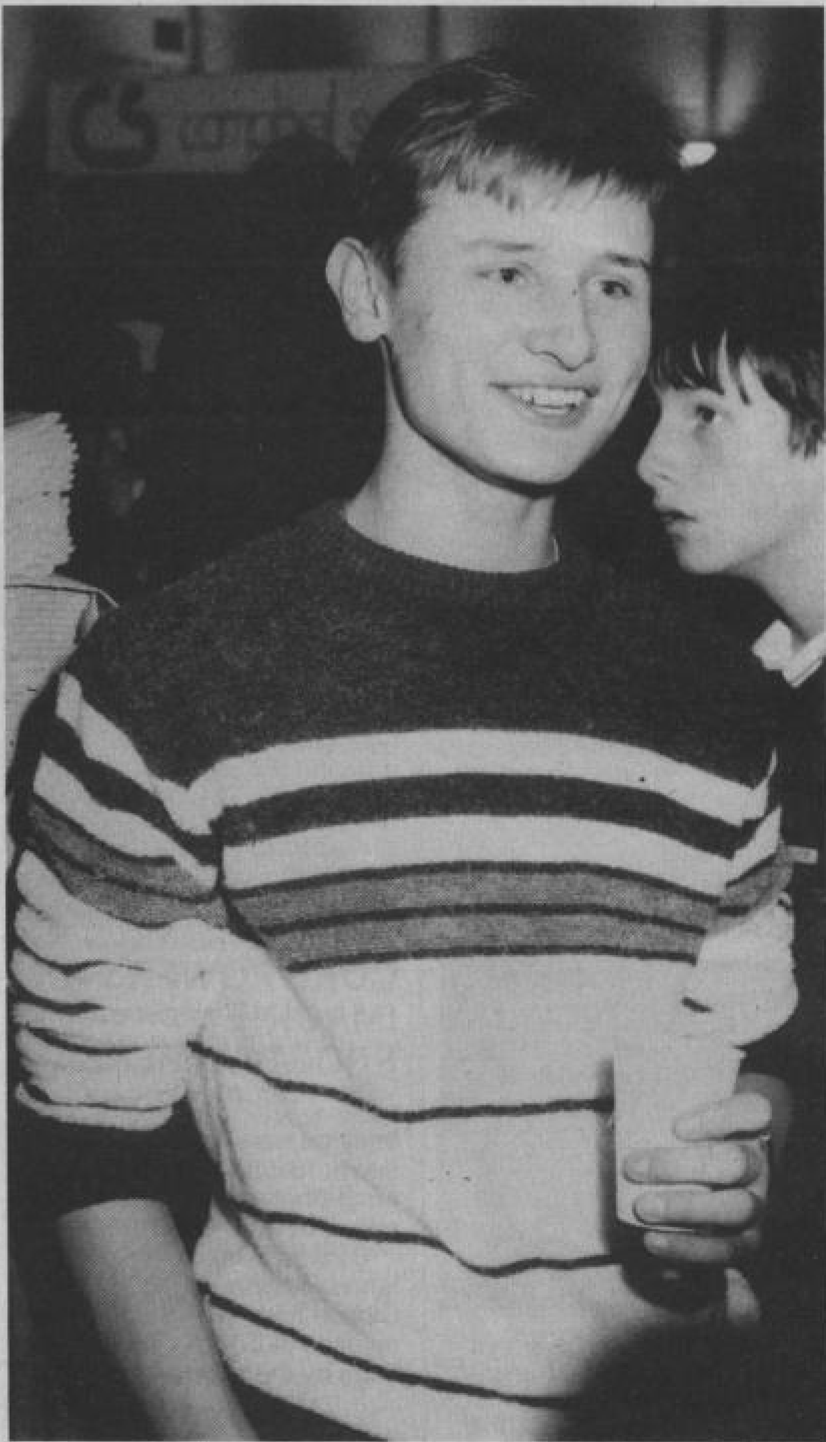
February the 1st. saw the computer press assembled in the Victorian opulence of London's Wyndhams Theatre for the launch of **Quicksilva's** new games for the Spectrum and Commodore 64. Six games were previewed, four for the Spectrum, *The Snowman, Dragonsbane, Fred* and the ultra-fast *Laserzone* by **Jeff Minter**, and two for the 64, *Sting 64* and a Commodore version of best-selling *Bugaboo*.

A curious air was lent the proceedings as Quickliva's **Rod Cousens** had only just returned from a trip to Las Vegas and the international computer shebang recently held there, and appeared on stage in full Wild Bill Hickcok rig. Guest programmer appearance was in the form of **David Shea**, who has written *The Snowman*, a very attractive adaption of the book by **Raymond Briggs.** *The Snowman* is not David's first claim to fame as he is also the author of Quicksilva's *Frenzy*, now a venerable classic of the shoot em up genre. *Fred, The Snowman* and *Laserzone* are all reviewed in this issue.



David Shea, author of **Quicksilva's** new game *Snowman*, at the press launch.





Frazer Hubbard (16), the adventurer who solved Hewson's *The Quest* in record time.

ADVENTURE WIZARD IN HELP LINE

16 year old **Frazer Hubbard** is the latest recruit to CRASH Magazine's team of young reviewers. Frazer first came to public notice in the February issue of *Micro Adventurer* when it was reported that he and his cousin, **James Hull,** had surprised **Hewson Consultants** by solving their *Quest Adventure* in only six weeks instead of the six months Hewson's had expected.

The article pointed out that Frazer had been in a car accident and therefore had time to persevere with the adventure, but both Frazer and his father Bill Hubbard, have pointed out that the facts were slightly wrong, by about two years or so. Frazer *had* been in a car accident two years previously — that had nothing to do with the time available to spend on the adventure, which was actually solved in six weeks worth of evenings after school.

Frazer will be doing reviews of adventure games for CRASH, and we hope that we will be able, with his help, to catch up a bit on the adventure side of the magazine. Adventures, of course, take some time in the reviewing if the reviews are to be fair to the program, and to date most of our regular reviews have been arcade fanatics. Frazer, himself is also fair hand with the joystick and at a recent meeting when CRASH readers interviewed Alison Maguire of Sinclair Research, he was more concerned with when *Jet Set Willy* was coming out than with the adventure cassettes we had for him! Frazer's review of *Lords of Time* can be found in this issue.

With Frazer's help CRASH is also launching an **Adventurer's Help Line.** If you have any questions, or problems (like getting stuck), write to us, **Adventure Help Line, Crash Micro, PO Box 10, Ludlow, Shropshire SY8 1DB.** With the kind of skills in lateral thinking that solved the Hewson *Quest Adventure* in a fraction of the time it should have taken, Frazer will dive into your problems and see if he can solve them for you, or offer hints which may be of help. We can't promise a 24-hour service on this though!!



SEXIST GAMES

In a blatant attempt to bring sexist issues into the computer games field, **C.C.S.** have announced the release of three titles under the general heading of *Games For Girls*. The games have been carefully chosen, say C.C.S., and provide a mixture of adventure and challenge combined with tests of co-ordination, intelligence and application of logic (presumably feminine logic).

In a passing reference to the well known wiles of women, C.C.S. go on to say that the games are less concerned with killing monsters and more concerned with bribing or avoiding them!

The titles are *Hickstead*, a show-jumping simulation, *Jungle Adventure* and *Diamond Quest*, all priced at £6.00.

Two other new games are *War 70* and *Pacific War*, carefully chosen with the violent, unco-ordinated and illogical agression of males in mind, and part of C.C.S. *War Games* series which was started off with *Battle 1917*, the 1983 Cambridge Award Winner. *War 70* features a war game set in Napoleonic times and is the sort of game that can go on for days. In *Pacific War* the American Fleet is under attack by Japanese fighter pilots. Both games are priced at £6.00. If you can save the day for the Americans, how about having a quick jump at *Hickstead* and showing those girls a thing or two about logic!

CODE NAME MAT

As we have reported in past issues, **Derek Brewster's** new game for **Micromega** has had a struggle finding a name. Derek had originally dubbed it *Invasion 2000* (it's surprising how many writers and programmers need some sort of name tag for a project before it will take shape jn their minds), and had wistfully told me that Micromega never used his titles. Never mind Derek, one day, one day...

At a recent sneak preview of the game in our Ludlow offices, we were able to see the problems of naming this mammoth space arcade strategy epic (see report in this issue), at which point, in some desperation, Micromega had code named it 'Hank' for the sake of calling it something! (Well, if Quicksilva can call a game *Fred*...) So it has come as some relief to hear that a name has been decided upon — and it is *Code Name Mat*. Anyone who has longed for a highly complex space arcade game which not only looks as if it's in 3D, but actually works completely in three dimensional space as well, had better keep their eyes peeled for the imminent release.

Derek Brewster, who also wrote the very successful adventure *Velnor's Lair* and *Star Trek* (now marketed by **Mikrogen**) is back at his keyboards trying to think up another name for another game. Will this be the one to win Micromega's approval for game name of the year? Fingers crossed Derek.



Derek Brewster

TAKE AIM FIRE!

There was a time when **SLR** stood for Single Lens Reflex. Militarists will tell you that it really stands for Self Loading Rifle, but film makers have the drop. As long ago as the 1936 Olympics, the idea of a reflex viewing system for cameras was



Invasion Force

Producer: **Micromania**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£5.95**
Language: **Machine code**
Author: **Dominic Wood**



This new offering from **Micromania** is one of the first Spectrum games for the **STACK LIGHT RIFLE** other than those already done by the Stack Light Rifle people themselves. One thing has to be said straight away — as the game can only be used in conjunction with the light rifle (or SLR), all comments and opinons are based on the fact that both game and SLR are backing each other up — in other words, the SLR is seen as an integral part of the game.

Invasion Foare itself is a successful cross between 'Space Invaders' and 'Missile Command'. Instead of guiding a cross wire sight and firing missiles in the path of incoming enemy missiles, you aim at the screen with your SLR and zap a wide variety of alien creatures which are out to destroy your six cities on the plain. This is a simple task at first with the aliens appearing singly, but as successive waves are wiped out they begin to appear in groups, rapidly, and moving erratically.

Styling is done on a basis of how many shots it required to rid the skies of aliens, and between each wave a staccato machine gun sound accompanies the appearance of bullets used, and your score is updated. There are 35 different types of enemy and you get an extra city at 10,000 points.

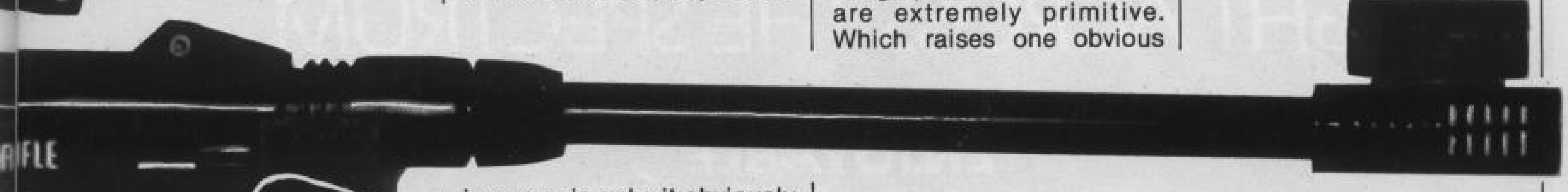
CRITICISM

'If this game didn't use the SLR it would still be worth buying because the graphics are excellent, some of the smoothest moving, large-sized aliens I have seen for this type of game, each with their own characteristic design, animation and movement. The first waves are easy to pick off and you soon get used to sighting and firing with the rifle, but as the game goes on it gets to be about as much as you can to do sight and fire before another three have knocked out a city. Despite its attractive graphics and really good sound, the game itself is simple and single-minded, and I would have to be honest and say that without the SLR its lasting appeal would be short. As it is I think this proved to be the most exhausting couple of hours (physically) I have spent in a long while.'

I can't make up my mind whether the SLR is a good buy or not, unlike a joystick it isn't universal in its applica-

developed and used. Anyway, it's all irrelevant now because computer games players know it stands for **Stack Light Rifle.**

The Stack Light Rifle is a giant light pen that works very well up to about ten feet from your television set. If you've tried drawing on the screen with a light pen, you'll know that you can't do much with it unless the tip of the pen is pressed close to the screen, so it gives some indication of the accuracy and power of the Stack Light Rifle that it operates so far from the screen. There have been some complaints recently in magazine reports about the accuracy of the 'telescopic' sight on the rifle's barrel, but in tests, we found our review rifle behaved with commendable accuracy if you used it as you would a normal rifle. Because it *isn't* a proper rifle sight, and *is* fixed to slide a limited distance, adjustable in one axis only, it obviously suffers some shortcomings, but nothing like we heard mentioned.





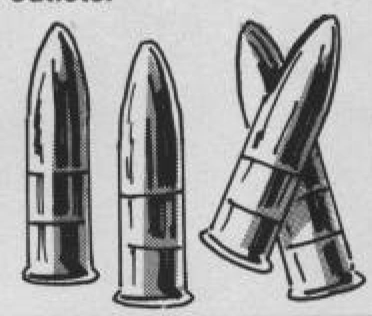
The rifle comes in three bits, the barrel, stock and firing mechanism. The barrel slots in and is held firm with a locking nut. The stock slips into a cut groove just behind the trigger guard and handle and then has a brass tightening screw to lock it into place. It takes approximately half a minute to strip it down so that it can be used as a hand gun instead of a rifle.

The games which are obviously suited to the use of the Stack Light Rifle are shoot em ups, and the rifle comes complete with a cassette containing three games which make the point: *High Noon, Shooting Gallery* and *Grouse Shoot.* The best of the three, *High Noon* by **D.E. Tsang,** pits you against endless gunslingers walking round the screen and turning to fire at you. It seems a shame that Stack couldn't have come up with better quality games to give away with the rifle. The *High Noon* gun fighters are reasonably animated, but the graphics of the other two are extremely primitive. Which raises one obvious point — is there enough software being produced to work with the Stack Light Rifle to make it worth forking out the £30 it costs? Stack say that they are talking to a number of software houses, notably **Anirog**, who are preparing games, and that there should be several on the market before long. **Micromania** are actually the first out with a game called *Invasion Force.*

Invasion Force is a different kettle of aliens compared to the games which come with the rifle, and one reviewer was overheard saying that he hadn't had as much fun since giving up Smirnov. We talked recently to another leading software house about games for the Stack Light Rifle, and they said that they wouldn't actually produce and sell one themselves because there is still a somewhat limited market at the moment, but they would certainly consider writing a game for Stack to market under the Stack name.

As long as new games come along, or indeed some old ones are made compatible for the rifle, then it should be assured a successful future, for there's no doubt that it brings an entirely new angle on computer games with it — or perhaps it would be more accurate to say that it brings a very old angle back, that of physically shooting something up!

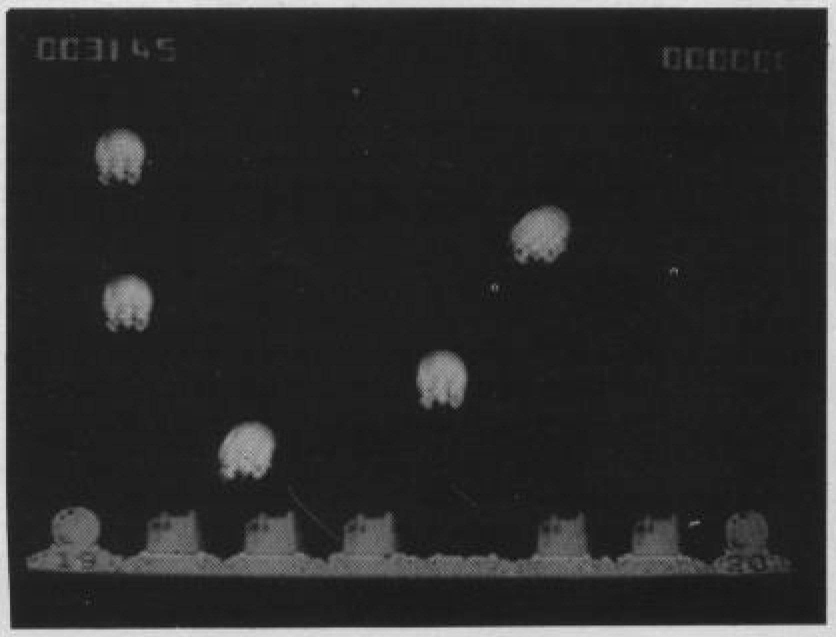
The Stack Light Rifle, priced £29.95 is available from many good computer retail outlets.



tion, so it's limited to certain games, in fact those made specially for it. Invasion Force *is such a game. It's certainly a very improved 'Space Invaders' type of game, and the 'Missile Command' aspect is the first I've seen where you can really play well because the SLR acts as effectively as a tracker ball. The graphics are nice and big, well drawn and extremely smooth. The explosions especially are excellent and realisitic. Because you have to be in a firing position, and because the game moves very fast after the first easy screens, it all becomes excitingly physical — like a real sport! I played for a little over an hour and found that my eyes had tired before I had. I think it's quite addictive for those who like shoot em ups — and for those with the SLR.'*

'Using the SLR is great fun. The directness of aiming through a rifle and squeezing a trigger lends that extra amount of realism to an otherwise standard shoot em up game, and gives it a whole new lease of life. Its addictiveness depends entirely on the muscles of the trigger finger! Great game and good sound.'

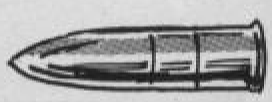
Just a few of the numerous aliens to pot with your SLR.



COMMENTS

Control keys: none
Joystick: Stack Light Rifle
In play: very responsive to the rifle
Colour: all colours used very well
Graphics: excellent
Sound: excellent
Skill levels: 35 progressively harder screens
Lives: 6 cities
General rating: above average shoot em up, and good value if you already own a Stack Light Rifle

Use of computer	**85%**
Graphics	**87%**
Playability	**95%**
Getting started	**88%**
Addictive qualities	**78%**
Value for money	**70%**
Overall	**84%**



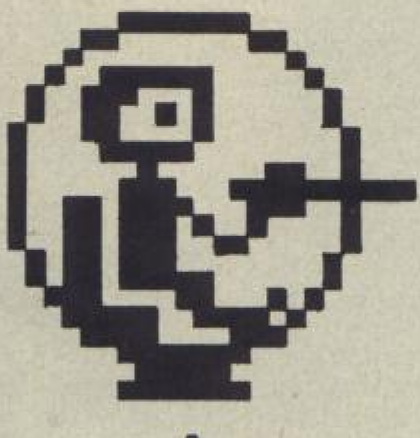

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THE MONTHLY CRASH QUIZ

So you think you know your heroes! Take a close look at the six silhouettes drawn out below and see if you can identify six well known Spectrum games they represent. If you can, write out your answers on a postcard or in a letter and send them to:

**CRASH MICRO QUIZ
PO BOX 10, LUDLOW,
SHROPSHIRE SY8 1DB**

Entries must be received by last post Friday 20th April. The first three correct entries drawn from the bag will each receive £25 worth of software of their choice, and the answers and winners will be announced in May's issue.



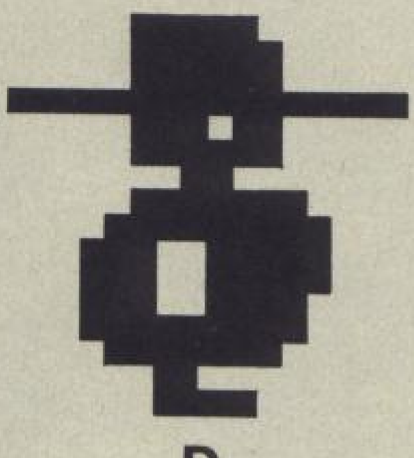
A



B



C



D



E



F

COMPETITION & QUIZ RESULTS

CRASH QUIZ ISSUE 1

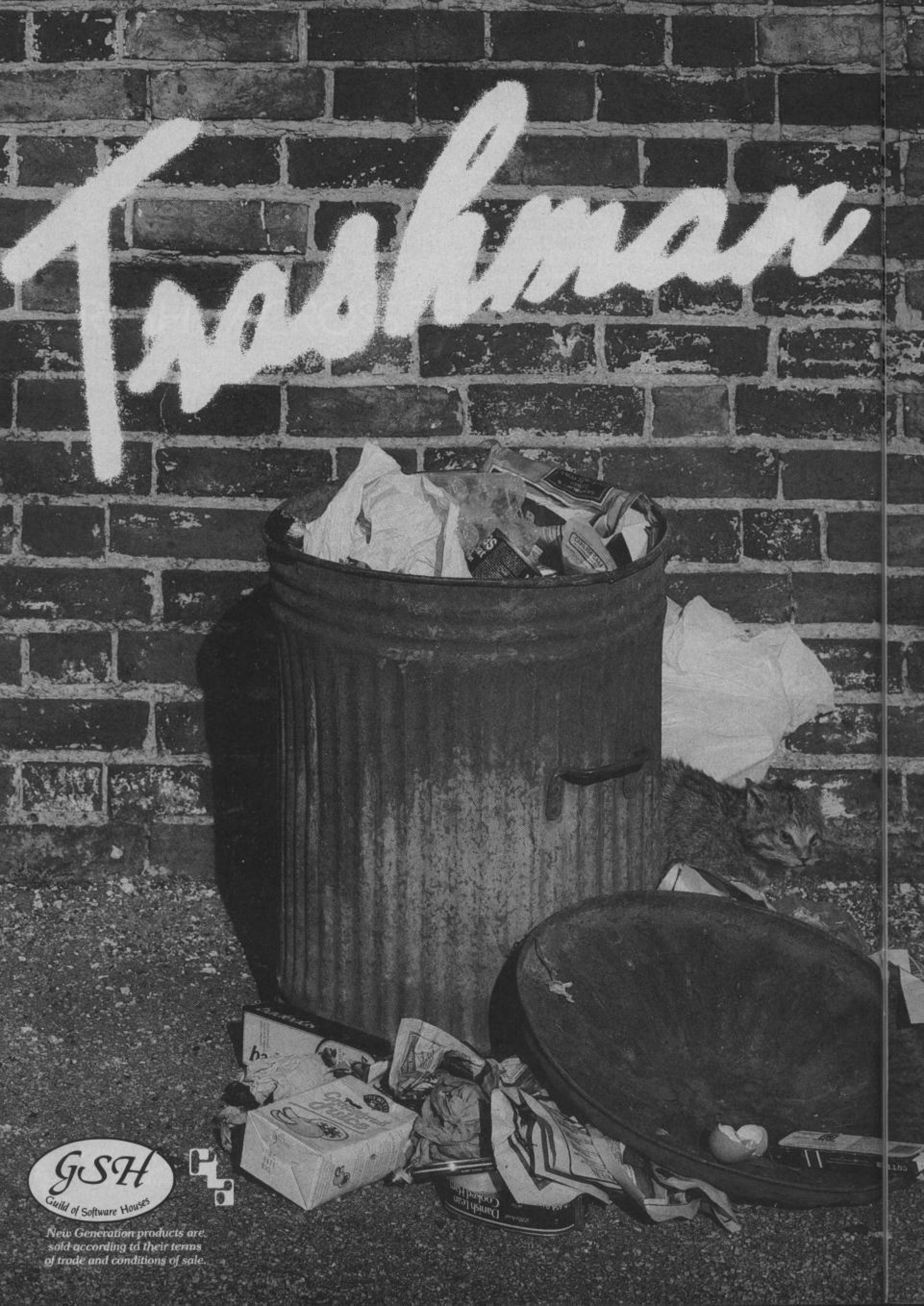
We asked you questions related to cassette inlays. The answers are:

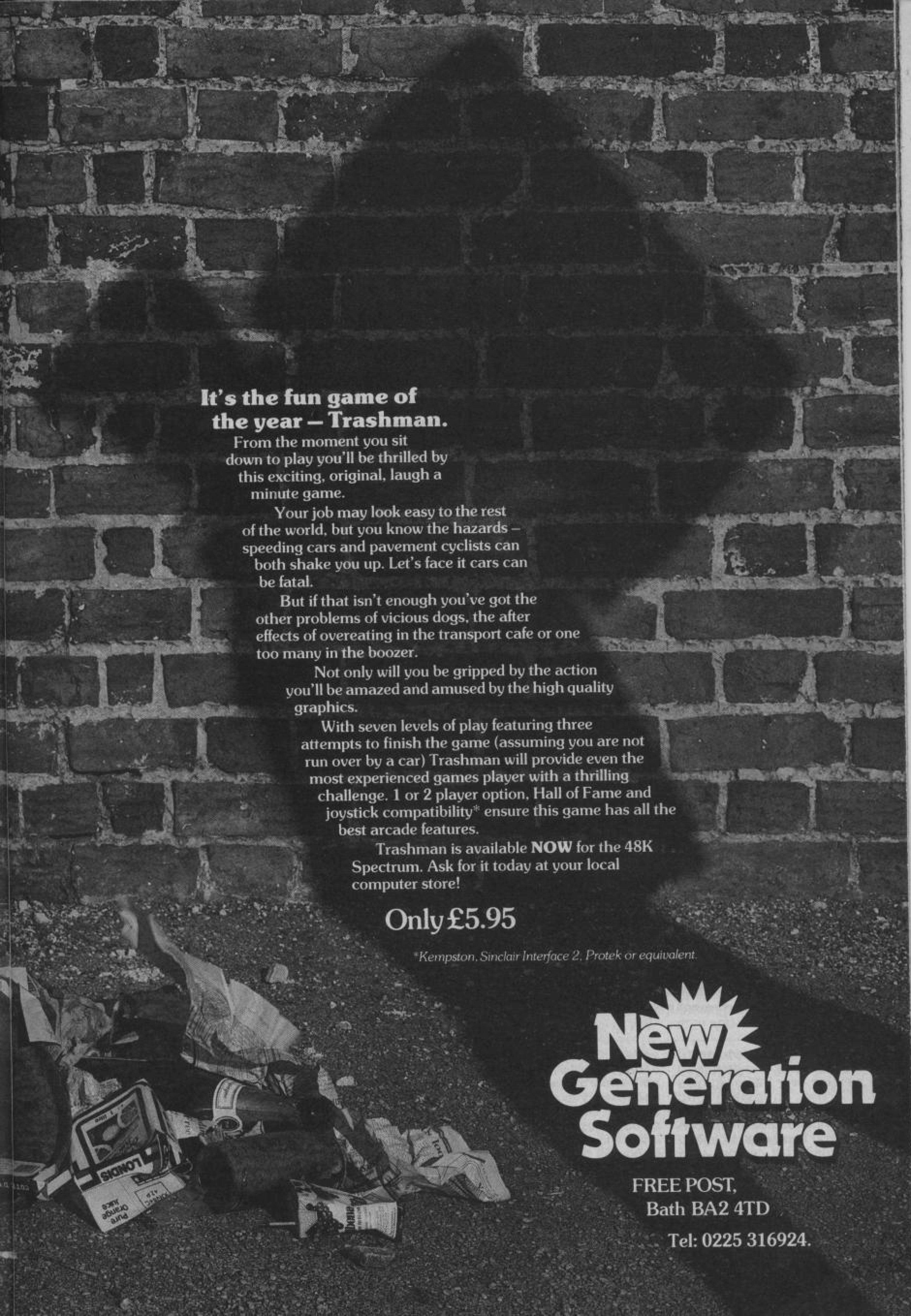
1 **Psst**
2 **Willy**
3 **Surbiton**
4 **Book of the Faluvian Empire**
5 **Meteor Storm, Frenzy, Astro Blaster ***
6 Mad Martha I & II
7 3D Combat Zone
8 Cookie
9 Molar Maul
10 Ostron
11 Joust
12 Bedlam
13 Mined-out
14 Corridors of Genon

* As a number of you knew, there were actually four games, not three which referred to the Forts of Falnon and/or the Xxkraan Raiders, the fourth was **Space Intruders.**
The three winners were: Ken Sigley, Walsall, Staffs; Ian Perkins, Lowdham, Notts; and Bill Hodson, Lancaster.

ZX MICROFAIR COMPETITION

We ran a pre-launch competition for visitors to the 9th ZX Microfair at London's Ally Pally which required them to find three missing squares of a larger drawing, the three pieces being dotted around somewhere in the pages of issue 1 of CRASH. The correct entries went into the bag and were drawn. The winnders are: **Steven Nesta,** Ewell, Surrey; **Martin Quarrington,** Gillingham, Kent; **David Callen,** Benfleet, Essex; **Nicholas Fielding,** Twickenham, Middx; **A. Harrison,** Luton, Beds; **K. Edwards,** Headington, Oxford; **C.Y. Choy,** Ruislip, Middx; **Adrian Thurston,** Buckhurst Hill, Essex; and **M.T. Baker,** Enfield, Middx.


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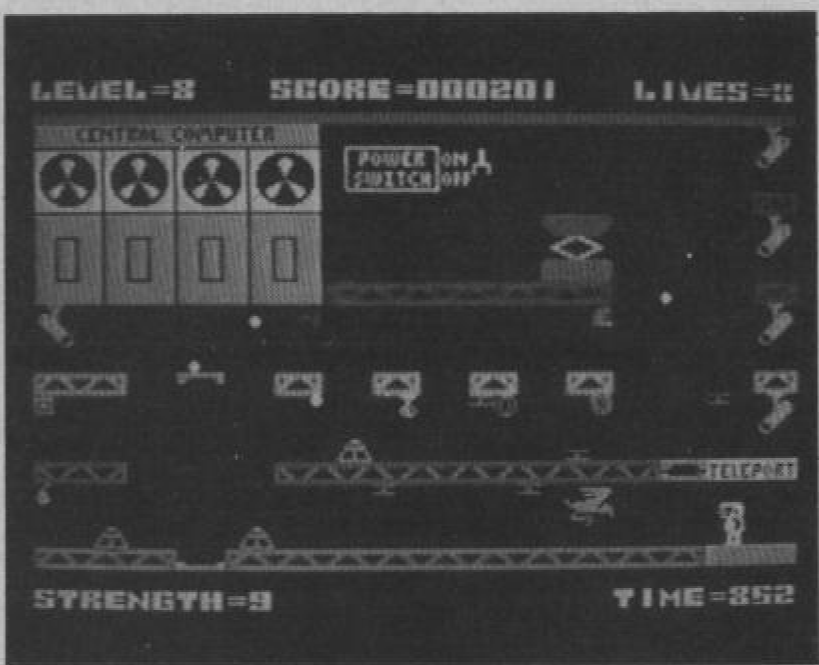

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1994

Producer: **Vision**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£6.95**
Language: **Machine code**
Author: **Kevin Bezant**

Subtitled *'Ten Years After'*, *1984* is set in a nightmare world where computers trap people. You are Smiffy, and you've just about had enough of the Central Computer so you decide to go and switch it off. Naturally enough the computer has other ideas and plenty of defences like cameras that throw plasma bolts at you.

This is a platform game with lifts and numerous bonus objects as well as hazards on route. The various lifts have electrified bases, so stepping onto one has to be well timed in order not to fry, and the screens are constructed in such a way that several lifts have to be employed, or the same two several times. On each but the last two screens the object is to get the key and put it in the keyhole to get to the next level, and do this by jumping over the jellydroids (a trifle annoying) and avoiding the harmless but annoying eagle which carries you back to the beginning again if it catches you. Each time you bump into a jelly droid or one of the ping-pong plasma bolts some energy is drained. When this has gone a further contact results in an explosion.



10 years after — coiled springs and ping-pong balls rule — OK?

CRITICISM

'With three or four lifts, some going all the way, some only half way, some up, some down, this is a platform game with an extremely busy looking screen. Jellydroids, coiled springs and plasma bolts which bounce around like balls, mean that you can barely take a step without losing energy. The real skill lies in timing the jumps to and from lifts and fortunately Smiffy jumps very nicely. The game has a practice mode for all eight levels which seems a bit strange, because it means you can play with unlimited lives. The graphics are very inventive and brightly coloured. All in all, quite addictive.'

'I think this game has been carefully engineered to be challenging and it almost comes off. The problem is the eagle which flies around and carries Smiffy back to the beginning. The game was difficult enough for enjoyment without that, but every time you get caught in his wretched talons you can sit back for a half a minute and wait until you're dumped back at the start. By the fifth time this happens you're about ready to give up on it. Strange that the practice mode gives you unlimited lives and lets you play all levels (?). Good reasonably smooth graphics, and plenty of playability, but the price seems way over the top to me for what it actually is.'

'Platform, jumping games do seem to be among the most addictive, and this one is no exception, although because of the practice mode I can't see its lasting value being all that good. After all, maddening as it may be, it's the fact that you want to get onto the next damned screen that gives a game its addictiveness. Here you can play any one you want. Good for time-pressed reviewers but not so good for the player generally. The graphics and sound effects are very good and the game is playable, but very pricey — and that's not such good news.'

COMMENTS

Control keys: 6/7 left/right, 0 jump
Joystick: none, doesn't need it
Keyboard play: responsive, but watch out for jump timing
Colour: excellent
Graphics: varied, detailed and reasonably smooth
Sound: good
Skill levels: 1
Lives: 3 (oficially)
Screens: 8
General rating: a very good game spoiled by a few details and its price.

Use of computer	80%
Graphics	79%
Playability	73%
Getting started	82%
Addictive qualities	68%
Value for money	68%
Overall	**75%**

Star Trade

Producer: **Digital Dexterity**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£6.50**
Language: **Machine code**
Author: **J. Plunkett**

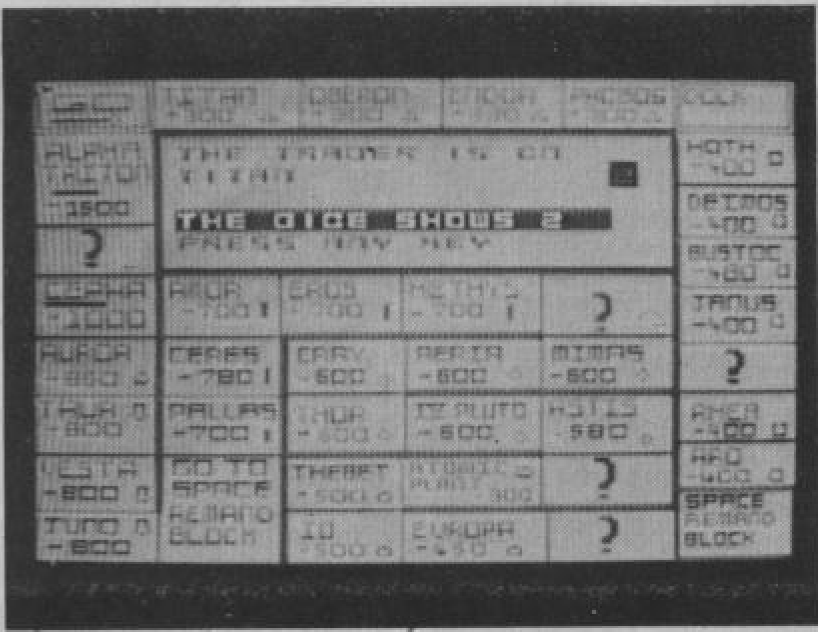
Star Trade is an intergalactic version of Monopoly with a few variations. They don't actually say that due to the kind of complications witch Automata have suffered, but they do say it is played very like Monopoly. It allows between one and nine players to take part but the computer will always muscle in on the game as well under the disguise of the name The Trader.

The instructions are on side B of the tape, which might prove to be irritating, except that the playing side is very well prompted and the available options shown all the way through. The board has many recognisable features like GO, Jail and Chance cards. Jail is referred to as the Space Remand Block, and the 'safe' corner is called Dock. The board is not at all traditional and includes a zig zag section which allows all the requisite spaces to fit in without having to make all the property squares too small. Each property is some intergalactic body like Phobos, Io, Pluto or Ceres, and they are worth varying amounts depending on which property group they fall in. Players owning complete groups may build cities on them and increase the rentable value. All that's missing is the Community Chest, otherwise it follows the usual Monopoly rules.

The dice is thrown automatically by the computer at the start of each player's turn. A 'Press any key' prompt clears the screen to tell you what property you have landed on, whether it's for sale, and if so, for how much. If it's already owned by another player, the rent is autodocked from you. If it isn't, then the option menu allows you to purchase, bid for it (if already owned), build a city on it, view the title deeds (of all properties), check how much money every player has left, continue the game or abort it.
Whenever it is The Trader's turn, the screen, normally in red with yellow detail, changes to blue with black detail. There is a 90 minute playing time allowed before the money totals are totted up and the winner announced.

CRITICISM

'The currency used is the Zegnon, but of course you never handle any, so it's as toy town as any other! The on-screen prompts make playing the game very easy and quite flexible, although one thing surprised me. When you opt to buy a property (press key 1) and enter it, there is a fail safe which pops up to ask you if you as sure (Y or N), but if you press key 7 (abort game) the game is killed off instantly. With up



The Trader — a mean opponent in galactic wrangling.

to nine players taking part I would have thought it was very easy to press key 7 by mistake. It would have been safer if they had provided a fail safe there too.'

'I feel that the graphics and colour could have been put to better use to illustrate who owned what. The property groups are identified by symbols like squares, circles, triangles etc., and due to the necessary crowding of written detail on the playing board, it can cause some eyestrain trying to see where everything is. The game is fairly good though.'

'The program is done so that everything happens very quickly with only the individual player holding up proceedings, and it is a very user-friendly game. But it seems a pity that they couldn't have used more colour, the result is a little drab looking, which is a shame because it is fun to play. It's addictivity obviously depends on how much you like playing games like Monopoly. If you do, then this will make a refreshing change from The Old Kent Road. The Trader (computer) must have been programmed by J.R. — its plays a pretty mean game.'

COMMENTS

Control keys: numerics by on-screen prompt
Colour: poor
Graphics: all text in a generated face, reasonable
Sound: entry beeps and some effects to indicate an event
Features: 1 — 9 players
General rating: above average

Use of computer	59%
Graphics	40%
Playability	56%
Getting started	58%
Addictive qualities	60%
Value for money	59%
Overall	55%

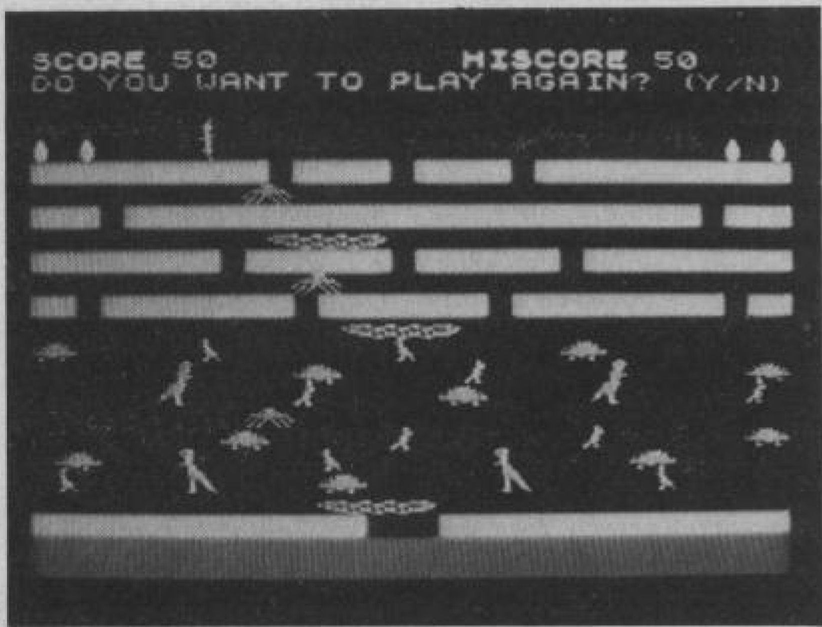


Caveman

Producer: **C.R.L.**
Memory required: **16K**
Retail price: **£5.95**
Language: **BASIC & some machine code**
Author: **R. Rowlingson**

The idea of this game is to pick your way across monster infested plains and through treacherous mountain ranges to reach the Pterodactyl's lair. There you must steal the monster's precious eggs and return safely home via mountains and plain, ensuring you are not eaten by a hungry beast on the way. You can only carry one egg at a time, and six are needed to complete a level.

So much for the cassette inlay blurb. The screen display doesn't look quite as thrilling. The lower half (which contains your safe home) has eight rows of various sized pre-historic monsters moving in alternate directions. The top half has four rows of blue coloured blocks with holes cut through. Above them are the six eggs, three to a side and the Pterodactyl on patrol above.



Is it all worth it for 6 boiled Pterodactyl eggs?

CRITICISM

'It seems astonishing to me that the software house who can bring out a game of the sophistication of *Omega Run* can also affer rubbish like this. The graphics, which incidentally contain nicely drawn creatures, are small, unanimated and the whole thing looks extremely primitive. The control of your man in character size leaps is quite unacceptable by today's standards, and of course the keys are slow due to the BASIC. I'm afraid it doesn't even rate a rating in my opinion.'

'Caveman *is a 'Frogger' type game where you must move your man up and down the screen avoiding the contrary flow of pre-historic traffic. The game is of poor quality. The graphics, small and jerky, and the key responses are not any good, and I had to force myself to give it 10% on addictive qualities.'*

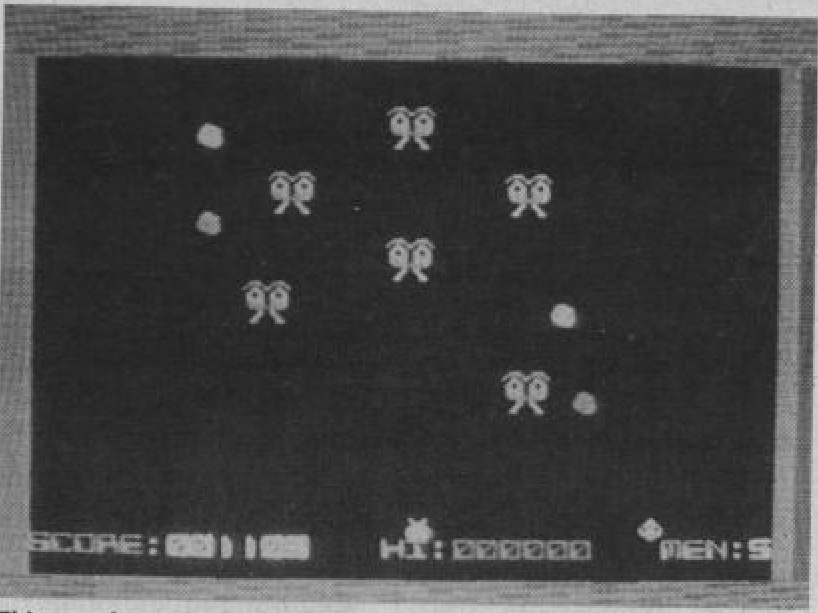
'I thought C.R.L. were supposed to have a high reputation? I seem to remember reading something about them not long after Christmas, being one of the new great companies supplying computer games and getting them into the shops in huge quantities. I hope the shop keepers read CRASH — they might learn something. This game, together with the other one I have just seen, *Lunar Lander*, cannot possibly be doing C.R.L.'s reputation any good at all. It certainly isn't worth spending a penny on.'

COMMENTS

Control keys: 1/2 = left/right, 0 = forwards/backwards
Joystick: none
Keyboard play: terrible
Use of colour: poor
Graphics: nice drawings, otherwise terrible
Sound: a few beeps, typical of a BASIC program
Lives: 3
General rating: a waste of time and money.

Use of computer	38%
Graphics	33%
Playability	25%
Getting started	50%
Addictive qualities	10%
Value for money	10%
Overall	28%





Things go bump in the night in Force Fighter.

Force Fighter

Producer: **Perfection**
Memory required: **16K**
Retail price: **£5.50**
Language: **Machine code**
Author: **T. Williams**

The intro on the cassette inlay immediately sets the scene for what is going to be a shoot em up, obviously. But it turns out to be a pretty fast game. Once again, you're Earth's last remaining hope as you battle your way through 15 waves of alien attackers.

Standard rules apply, i.e. left/right and fire all from the base of the screen. Your ship is dwarfed by the various aliens which attack in groups of five. These move about the screen in a fairly random pattern of jiggles, often reaching right down to the base line. In addition, there are meteors falling constantly from the top of the screen and now and again one will remain on the base line as a mine. Should two land, the Force Fighter can get badly hemmed in — fortunately they dissipate themselves.

Shooting an alien craft results in its falling straight down on top of you. Between each survived wave a bonus score is added to your main score dependent upon the time taken.

CRITICISM

'Force Fighter is a fairly typical shoot em up game with graphics which are a little jerky but good, even wierd aliens. The game is very very fast and challenging due to its speed. The main difficulty is that if the fire button is pressed too hard, the shot will not go up the screen. It's good, but only one of a multitude of shoot em up games.'

'The graphics are fast and detailed, although I thought 'your' ship is a bit small. There are lots — well 15 — types of alien in separate waves, and as your progress from screen to screen, more and more meteors, which can't be shot, to dodge. As the aliens are knocked out on each screen, everything moves faster and faster. On the whole I didn't enjoy this one as much as Perfection's Odyssey 1 because it becomes a bit boring, just shooting and dodging.'

'I don't know whether it's intended as a device, or whether it's really a bug, but if you press the fire button and keep it held, the shot stays poised above the nose of your ship until you release the key (only one shot on screen allowed at a time, so pressing twice in quick succession merely cancells out the first shot before it reaches its target). As a device it can be very useful for timing, or re-timing the actual release of the shot, or, when the aliens get right to the bottom, you can wave the shot around like a flag unti it literally wipes one out. But get out from under quickly or the alien will crush you. I must say, shoot em up games may be old hat, even boring, but I thought *Force Fighter* was pretty addictive. Watch out if you select the joystick option (Kempston) by accident and then hit any key between 5 and 0 because it will crash the program.'

COMMENTS

Control keys: CAPS SHIFT/Z = left/right, P = fire
Joystick: Kempston
Keyboard play: fast and responsive
Use of colour: average to good
Graphics: good although aliens are a little jerky
Sound: above average and good tunes
Skill levels: progressive
Lives: 5
Screens: 15
General rating: above average

Use of computer	66%
Graphics	70%
Playability	70%
Getting started	68%
Addictive qualities	63%
Value for money	68%
Overall	**68%**

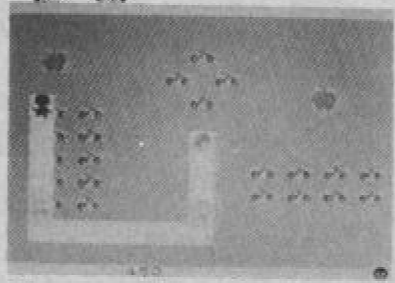
Dinky Digger

Producer: **Postern**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£6.95**
Language: **Machine code**

As its name implies, this is another 'Dig-Dug' digger game, where you wander the screen, creating pathways along which monsters will chase you. The object is to collect the many cherries on the screen and avoid the chasers by undermining the large apples to either block a passageway or, better still, squash them dead. The ultimate prize for Dinky is the lime cake at the centre of the screen.

Clearing a screen results in another with even faster monsters. Apart from apples, Dinky can use crystal balls to throw at the approaching monsters, throwing in the direction of movement but he's only given two to use.





Chance would be a fine thing in Dinky Digger.

CRITICISM

'I found this game very unplayable. The monsters seem to be super fast while Dinky has feet of lead. On most occasions there's not even time to tunnel enough to be able to turn around and throw your crystal ball. The odds are heavily stacked against you, making the game very hard. But not 'hard' as in 'challenging' or 'difficult', but 'hard' as in not given a chance. The graphics are reasonable, but the so-called 'mind-blowing sound effects' tend to leave a little to be desired. Fair to poor and for kamikazes only. If this is priced at Postern's usual £7 price, then it's terrible value for money.'

'If this was skill level 50, then I might understand it, but as there is only the one speed/skill level option, I don't. Did the author or producer of the game try it out? Did anyone play test it? If they did, then all I can say is that Cheltenham must breed super herioc arcade players. In my opinion all the skill elements of this game have been got wrong. It just doesn't work! A pity for the graphics, which are quite good.'

'I'm afraid *Dinky Digger* is unplayable because the monsters move too fast — Dinky doesn't stand a chance, especially with only two crystal balls. If he'd had more balls (not guts, just balls) it might have been a better game. In a sense, it doesn't matter but, why did they have to put that tune in between each very short life — it soon becomes maddening.'

COMMENTS

Control keys: top row = throw ball, second row = up, third row = down, left & right, alternate keys on bottom row
Joystick: none
Keyboard play: responsive
Use of colour: poor, a rather yucky green screen
Sound: just average
Skill levels: progressive impossibility
Lives: 3
General rating: poor to fair, and poor value.

Use of computer	42%
Graphics	50%
Playability	23%
Getting started	30%
Addictive qualities	30%
Value for money	25%
Overall	**33%**



Bimbo

Producer: **Joe the Lion**
Memory required: **16K**
Retail price: **£5.45**
Language: **Machine code**
Author: **Jonathan Easter**

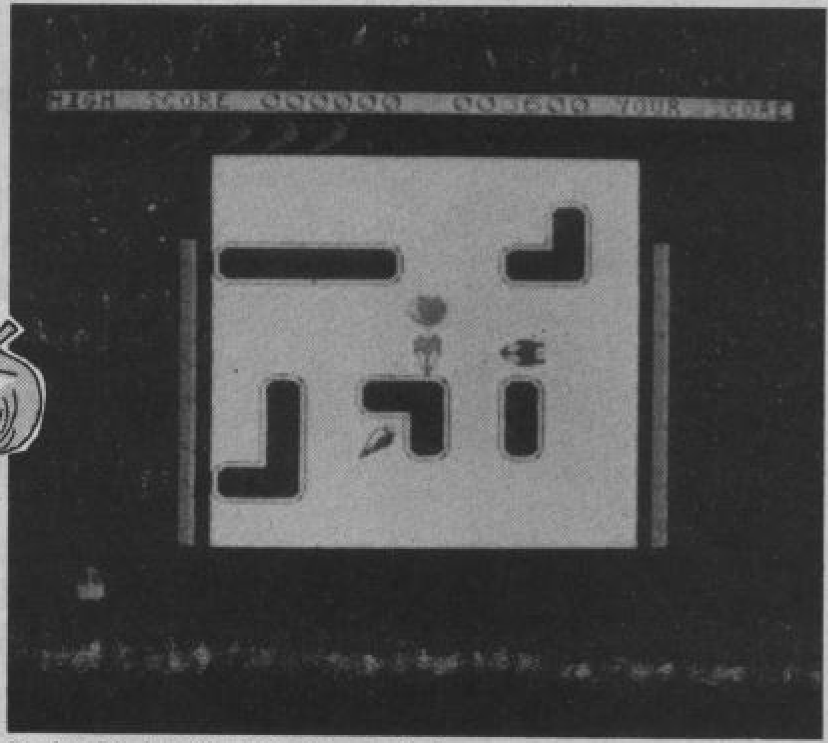
For those who enjoy the blurb on inlay cards, *Bimbo* should provide some amusing reading before playing the game. The story tells of Bimbo rabbit and his Australian friend Bruce, and manages to fit into its theme just about all the best known software houses along the lines of:

"Just imagine," said Bruce. "Shh," said Bimbo, "I'm trying to learn my alphabet so I can be superior to the rest of the class."

"You'll never beat soft Tek. He says he finds english addictive and he's only severn. It's his ultimate ambition to teach these new automata."

And so on. The game is a four directional scrolling maze many times the size of the playing area, in which Bimbo must move, eating ten carrots and avoiding the chasing black rabbits. There are also clover leaves to be found which can be eaten for bonus points. Black rabbits may be delayed by dropping green apples in their paths which they stop to eat. Moving and dropping apples uses up energy which is regained by eating the carrots, but if you run out of energy before eating all the carrots, then you're dead. The game starts off with just one rabbit chasing, but with each level progressed the number of black rabbits increases up to a maximum of ten. Each fourth screen is a special one without rabbits, but a severe time limit imposed by a dropping energy rate which means you must eat all the carrots before it expires.

To help you, there is a radar screen which shows the positions of Bimbo, black rabbits and all the carrots. Extra life at 10,000 points.



Bimbo, Bimbo, where ya gonna go-io ?

CRITICISM

'The game has some good graphics and use of colour. The scrolling type of maze idea has been used before, most notably in *Splat*, and *Mazizas*, but here there are a couple of changes. The carrots and rabbits chasing you show up on a radar screen, which makes it quite fun to play. I enjoyed the game but it seemed to lack lasting appeal.'

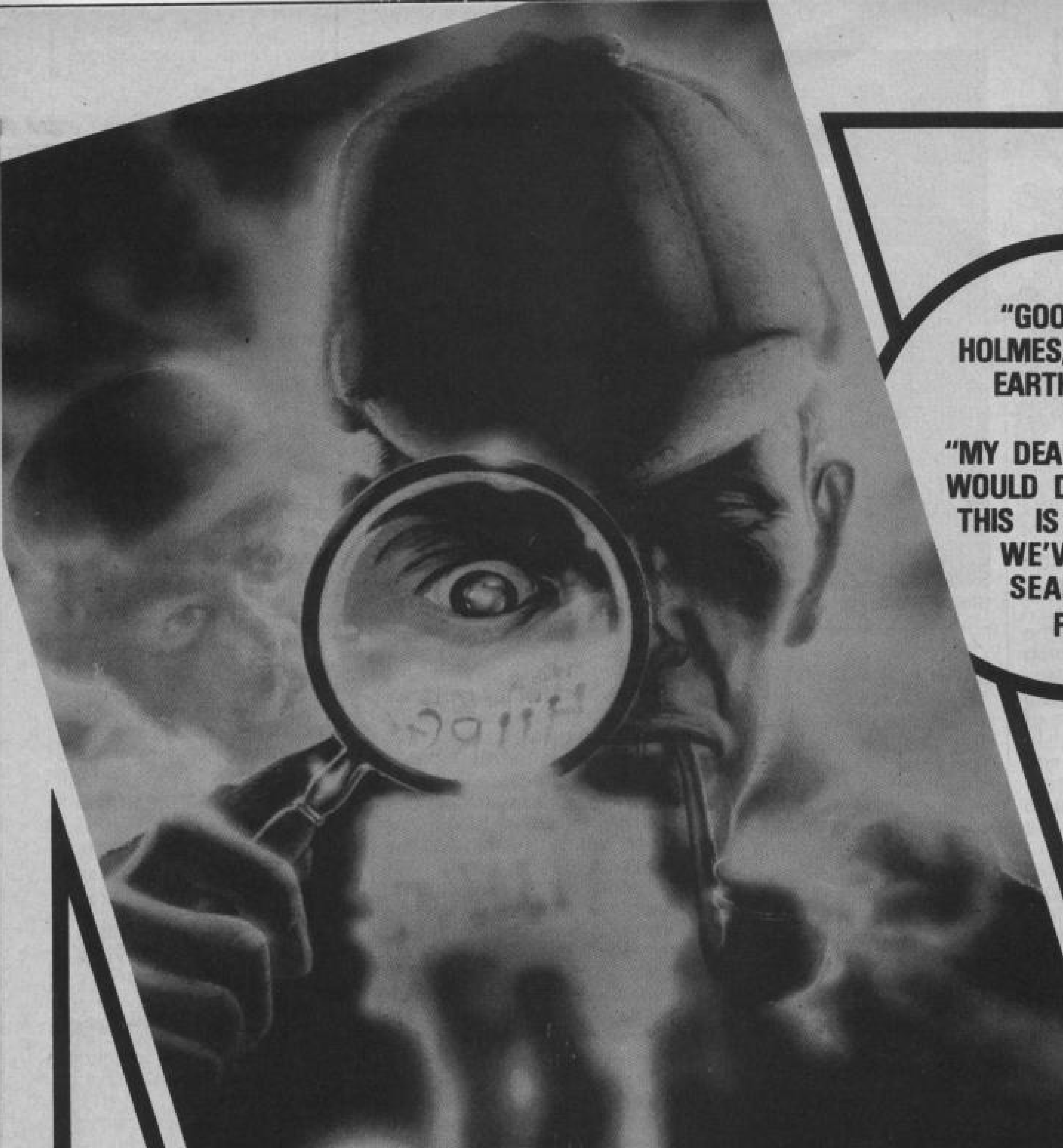
'The instructions don't tell you on the otherwise excellent inlay that there are pits which kill you if you fall in them, so check the on-screen instructions too! Mind you, I thought rabbits wouldn't be worried by things like pits, but then, frogs seem to drown in water in 'Frogger' games, so I suppose anything goes! Bimbo *is a very different game, even the first level is quite hard and the rabbit chases pretty closely on your tail. He doesn't follow you right behind, often dodging the other side of a bit of the maze to catch you as you come round the corner. Quick reactions are necessary, so it seems a shame that they haven't provided alternate control keys or a joystick option. The drop apple keys are too far away from the directional keys and in a hurry you can lose a life in the time it takes to move a hand off the direction keys and try to find the drop keys.'*

'*Bimbo* can be a bit hard to control at times because once the key is pressed he keeps moving until another direction key is presses or he runs against a maze wall. The game is, however, lots of fun to play and quite challenging. I don't know whether it's the subject matter or what, but I think it had as much lasting appeal as a game of its obvious difficulty should have. Perhaps the fact that the carrots always appear in the same places each game means that you get to know where to look for them without having to use the radar. But I'm sure it's going to appeal to quite a lot of people, perhaps a very difficlty game for younger players.'

COMMENTS

Control keys: 2/W = up/down, 9/0 = left right, Z or M = drop apple, not the best arrangement
Joystick: none
Keyboard play: responsive, but a key press keeps Bimbo in motion and reaching for apples can be a problem
Use of colour: reasonable to good
Graphics: generally good although a little jerky
Sound: good tune, otherwise average
Skill levels: progressive difficulty
Lives: 5
General rating: a very good game let down by the control keys and medium addictive.

Use of computer	58%
Graphics	78%
Playability	75%
Getting started	69%
Addictive qualities	55%
Value for money	85%
Overall	**70%**



"GOOD GRIEF, HOLMES, WHAT ON EARTH IS IT?"

"MY DEAR WATSON, I WOULD DEDUCE THAT THIS IS THE H.U.R.G. WE'VE BEEN SEARCHING FOR!"

The computer games software field is frought with pitfalls and lethal as a minefield to a speculating prospector. Prophets as powerful as Elijah would come undone in trying to safely predict when a game will actually appear. So *Computer & Video Games* must be forgiven their January issue's confident assertion that January 15th was the day to be ready with £14.95 to purchase Melbourne House's latest adventure game, the fabled *Sherlock Holmes*.

The latest date for releasing *Sherlock Holmes* now is 'sometime in May,' according to **Paula Byrnes**, the PR person for Melbourne House. A program of this scope can encounter all sorts of problems, especially when its author sets such high standards. The author is **Philip Mitchell** who wrote the *Hobbit*, the biggest selling adventure for the Spectrum of all time. That took Philip and his expert team some eighteen months to write and get ready for release. *Sherlock Holmes*, by all accounts is going to make the *Hobbit* look out of date. At the end of a long haul like that, it's quite easy to be out on the estimated time of arrival by three or four months!

Melbourne House derives its name from the city in Australia where it is based. Formed in 1977 by **Alfred Milgrom** and **Naomi Besen**, the company exploited Milgrom's knowledge of computer science and Besen's marketing expertise to move them from being a general publishing company into one exclusively oriented around home computers. In August 1980 they published one of the first ever books for the personal computer market. It was *30 programs for the Sinclair ZX80*, and was an overwhelming success. Since then Melbourne House has been responsible for a very wide range of books for several computers including titles like *Spectrum Hardware Manual* and *Spectrum Microdrive Book*.

Quite consistently, the two best selling Spectrum programs during 1983 were Mitchell's *Hobbit* and a version of the arcade classic 'Scramble' game,

Hobbit Hurg & Holmes

Penetrator. In between then and now there has also been the worthy but less spectacular *Terror-Daktil* and the even worthier utility, *Melbourne Draw*. This month now sees the release of the long awaited game designer *H.U.R.G.*, which is reviewed in detail shortly.

INGLISH

The success of the *Hobbit* was largely due to it's artificial intelligence, present in a very primitive form, but mostly to its user-friendliness in the form of '**Inglish**'. Mitchell worked very hard on trying to make a program which would allow the player to speak to the computer in a more normal mode than is common with most other adventures — the verb/noun form (take lamp) or the verb/noun/conjunction/verb 2/ form (take lamp and light). Inglish allows for much longer sentences and Mitchell has remarked on the fact that with that flexibility built into the *Hobbit*, players still tend to under-use it, sticking to the verb/noun form. A data base in the program contains all the acceptable words and drives an applicator which applies the commands to the game. But it is the analyser which makes the whole thing tick. It takes the imput through several checks that ensure that the words are in the program's vocabulary, that the syntax makes sense in the game's context and that they make sense in context of the game's development to that point.

ELEMENTARY MY DEAR WATSON

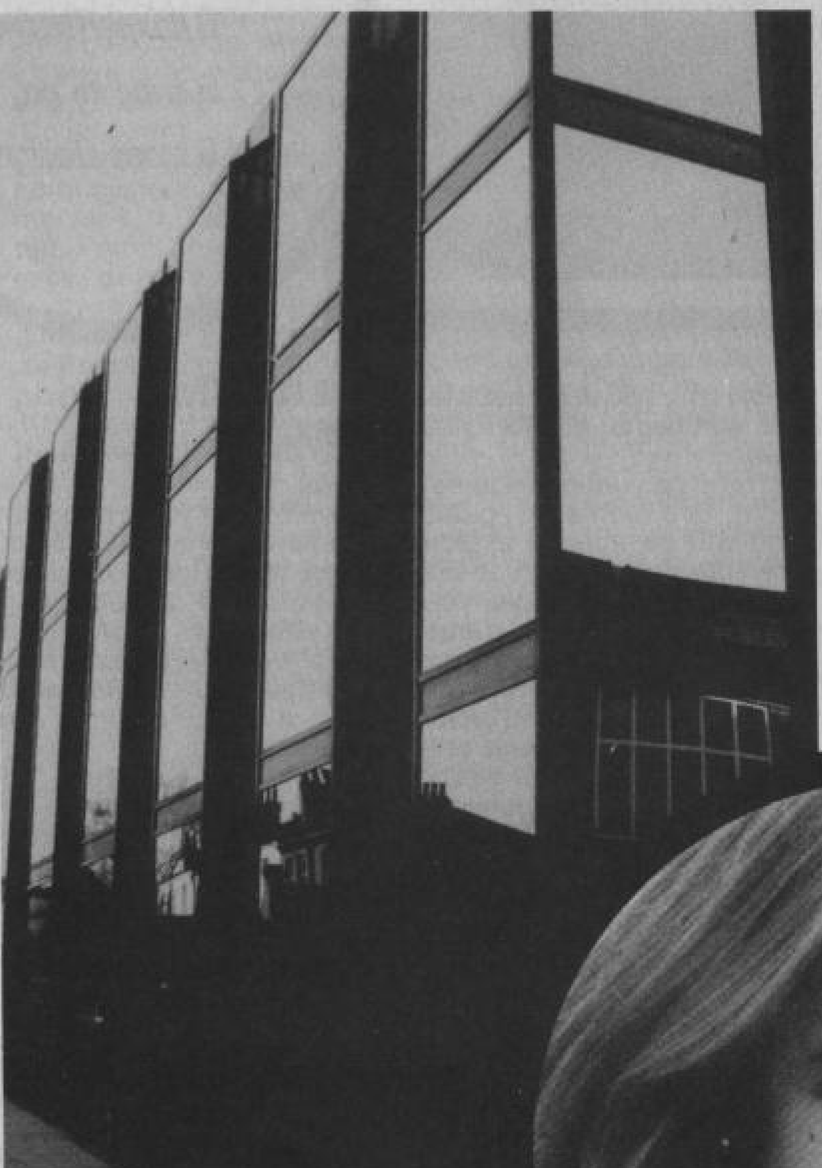
Sherlock Holmes is a who dunnit on a lavish scale, clues, suspects, foggy London streets are all there and a murder to be solved. Dr. Watson is on hand with his usual bonhomie, common sense and unhelpful advice, a contrast to Inspector Lestrade of the Yard, whom Holmes must first convince before aprehending the criminal can take place.

All this requires a great deal of conversation to take place between the participants in order to peel away the onion layers of mystery and confusion. For the game to work at all in a realistic manner the Inglish of the *Hobbit* has had to be refined and improved enormously.

One other main attraction of the *Hobbit* was the element of surprise in each game played, a result of the artificial intelligence. The characters in the adventure seemed to have a life of their own — they didn't always do the same thing twice. Their lives went on independently of the game's progress, sometimes turning up dead when you next encountered them as if some disaster had overtaken them while your back was turned. This aspect, too, has had to be refined to give *Sherlock Holmes* the playing appeal needed to keep adventurers coming back for more.

TEAMWORK

All this work isn't undertaken solely by Philip Mitchell. In effect he heads a team which includes another programmer, **Veronica Megher**, **Stuart Richie**, the designer of Inglish, and **Sarah Byrnes**, a Holmes expert who is writing the story line. The whole is presided over by Alfred Milgrom under Melbourne's warm Australian sun. ▶



The new London headquarters of Melbourne House in Richmond.



Paula Byrnes, in charge of PR for **Melbourne House**.

Thrilled with *H.U.R.G.* and awaiting the great detective, **Christine Laugharne**, and **Paula Byrnes** at Melbourne House.



ALL YOU NEED IS IMAGINATION

Meanwhile, under Britain's rainy skies, the London end of Melbourne House has just moved into its new offices in Richmond where UK Sales Director **Christine Laugharne** and **Paula Byrnes** are busy getting ready for the huge demand for *H.U.R.G.* The new games designer should do a lot more than brighten our wintry days and fill in the hours until Sherlock arrives in a mist-shrouded Baker Street. *H.U.R.G.*, which stands for High Level User-Friendly Real Time Games Designer, is a highly flexible and comprehensive program which can be used for designing your own games. It has been written and developed by **William Tang**, and is now reviewed in detail by **Franco Frey**.

***H**elp*

***U**nexperienced*

***R**aring to go*

***G**ames Designers*

Ever thought you were born to become the million — making, hyped and idolised games author of all times, but unfortunately lacking in the small detail of not comprehending black machine code magic, well, what the hex, here's your chance to join the small elite world of binary and mnemonic whiz-kids who light up the vast Spectrum of our games universe.

The magic potion doesn't come in a six pack, but consists of a single cassette and extensive manual. As the doctor would say, 'take in small dosages and the medicine will remedy your handicap and change your lifestyle as a side effect.'

THE DAWN OF A NEW ERA

All stars have humble beginnings and you will be no exception to the rule. After loading HURG your best option will be to load via HURG **main menu** one of the three sample games programs supplied with the cassette. *MANICKOALA* is a scaled down version of Manic you know who and demonstrates the abilities of HURG to the hilt.

If you can unhook yourself from this addictive game, you will be able to explore the **edit menu**, which at first glance may resemble your regular adventure game. Have no fear, intrepid explorer, as absolutely every single facility is menu driven and your intelligence is only tested with simple yes/no and quantity questions. In fact HURG can be manipulated by Kempston joystick if so desired.

As you change each individual feature of the game, you may return to main menu and select to **play game** to inspect immediately the effect of the particular modification. Eventually you will not recognise the original *MANICKOALA* for all the radical and devastating changes and this will mean that you are very near to knowing HURG as intimately as your pocket. In fact you will already have transformed yourself into Prince Charming and are ready to kiss to life the most lovely creatures and creations of software land.

THE CREATIVE PERIOD

Develop in your mind the scenario of your first masterpiece taking into account the player, the objects, the screen and background details and special effects. In effect you should end up with a script for your new creation.

Next prepare the background screen to the game using one of the many screen drawings utilities such as the **Trojan Lightpen** (reviewed this month), *Paintbox* (reviewed last month) or *Melbourne Draw* with its excellent detail magnification facility. Whatever way you develop your background, it should end up as a screen dump on tape for later use.

Load HURG and enter **edit mode**. Select load background and load the earlier prepared screen file from tape. The action can now be programmed.

HURG allows up to four games variations or stages, where the background remains the same, but the movement and actions of player and objects may vary.

Select **normal game**. The size, shape and animation of the player will have to be designed and to this purpose you select the **player menu**. Up to eight frames (or sprites) are available and can be used for one movement direction only or split up into up to four directions. The shape generator is excellent and displays the player magnified and in original size, caters for mirror image and animation sequencing of the frames. The animation to displacement ratio may easily be adjusted visually during the movement display and can thus be optimised. There is even the option of continuous movement of the player (runaway robot).

Next the collision table has to be programmed: No go, go, eat and crash are programmed according to the ink and paper values of the character to be occupied by the player. This sets the relation of the player to the surroundings and the moving objects.

Next game start and stop conditions have to be programmed: Decide on initial position and moving direc-

tion of the player during regeneration delay time, existence of objects amount of lives and limited duration are further variables. The movement of the player may be restricted in any of the four directions and the player may be subjected to gravity in any of four directions.

Boundaries may be set up for restricting the movement of the player within a specified area of the screen and wrap around movement may be selected within these restricted areas. The selection is facilitated by the display of the movement grid over the existing background screen.

Up to three different sized explosions and their colour and relative positions to the players can be selected for when a crash or collision occurs.

Special events may be considered by indicating the collision condition, what the effect of the event is (eat, crash, special score) and whether the change is permanent or of limited duration. The player's way of life is now established. But the player may well find life boring in the set surroundings. To prevent him or her from dozing off to sleep up to eight different objects (friends or foes) will have to be created. The objects are treated similar to the player: the object menu follows the same pattern as the player menu, but has in addition a movement pattern selection, as the objects are not under the control of the games player. The objects may be programmed to mimmick the player or one of the other objects, move randomnly, in a straight line (four directions) move towards or away from the player or other objects or along a user defined path. There are eight possible paths which may be accessed and programmed directly from the edit menu and can be made very complex. Up to four paths may be linked up in sequence to create extremely complicated routes.

So far the background, the player and objects and all their movements have been programmed. To help with the odds and to make the game attractive obviously our player must be given a special weapon, which is under the control of the games player's fire button:

The fire button action menu caters for three different options: No fire action, player shoot and player jump action. Selection of the shoot action calls up the player bullet generation program, which is an exact copy of the object generator.

The player jump facility consists of a jump path generator which works similar to the user defined path of the objects. A maximum character fall height may be specified.

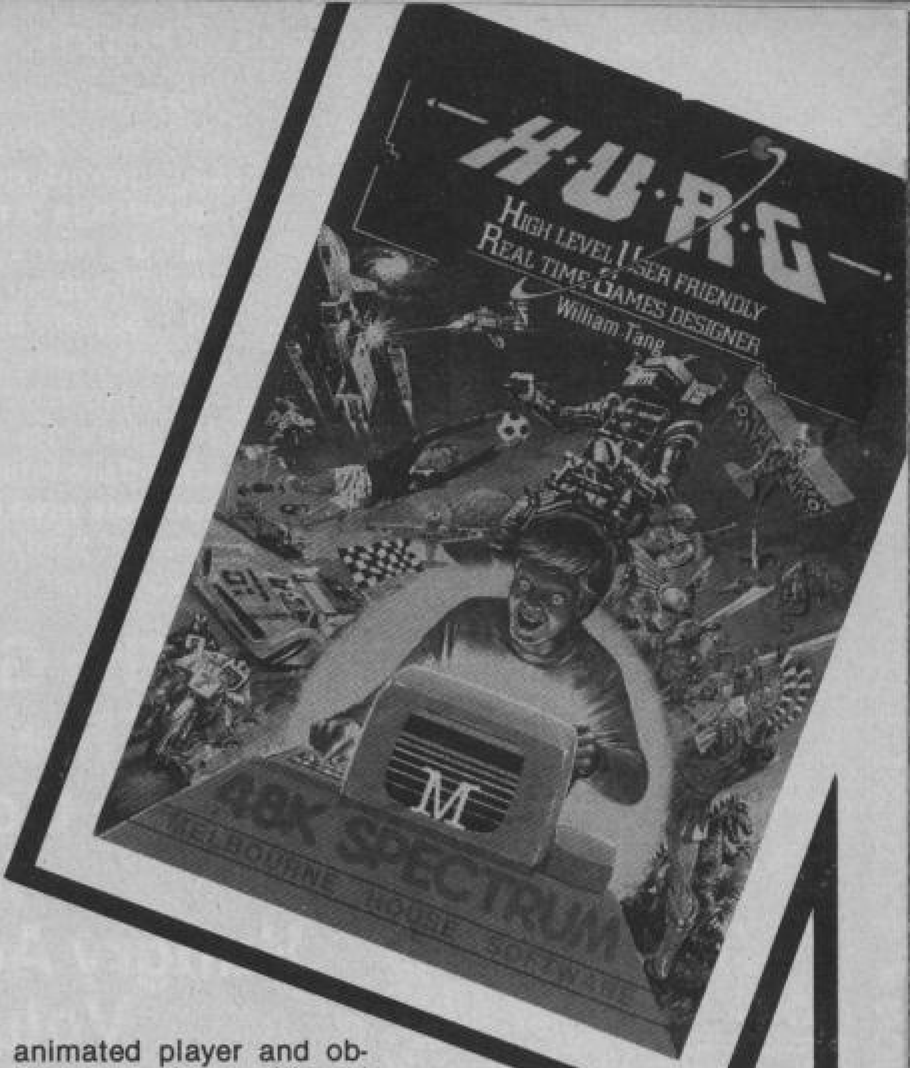
Once happy with the normal game stage you should proceed to the other three variations or stages of the game, which require the same programming procedure. The main body of the game will then be completed.

Returning to the edit menu there are still three unused facilites for completing the games design:

The new frame conditions: A new frame may occur if either all objects are non existent (after a shoot out) or after a definable delay (Countdown).

Scoring: A game without a point system is like a fruit machine without a pay out. Points for eating, object deaths and new frames start bonuses should cater for the most mathematical of games players.

Title page: Probably the most restrictive feature of HURG is the title page, which will only allow for text display. It would have been a nice feature to be able to load a screen title picture in a similar manner as with the background. As a bonus though the animated player and objects may be positioned selectively on the title page and will give a hint of things to come.



THE AFTERMATH

It is difficult to find fault with such a complete games generation program. Nonetheless two major handicaps become apparent: No provision has been made for music lovers and noise addicts. This is obviously a move back to the classic silent era. A set of standard noises and tunes could have filled the apparent audio gap.

The other handicap became apparent when trying to load one of the sample games programs without having loaded HURG first. The games produced by HURG cannot be run independently without HURG. This destroys any idea of making fame and fortune with the resulting masterpiece. Big commercial software successes are best left to the professional machine coder. . .

HURG SPECIFICATIONS

PLAYER:
Qty.:1
Size up to 9 char. square, eg 1x1, 2x2, 3x3, 2x4 etc
frames: 8 for 4 dir, eg 2 dir 4 seq, 4 dir 2 seq, 1 dir 8 seq
cont. movement option
collosion option: go, no go, eat, crash
Regeneration
initial position (rel or abs)
initial moving direction (rel or abs)
Regeneration delay time
Existence of object
Amount of lives
Life duration
Movement restriction in any of 4 dir.
Gravity in any of 4 dir.
Movement boundaries: hor. and vert. wrap around within confined areas option
Explosions: 3 size, colour and position (rel. player) selectable.
Special events: collision condition, effect or event (eat, crash, special score)
Duration (o to permanent)

OBJECT
same as player, but with addition:
Movement pattern: Mimmicking player or other object
Random
Straight line (4 dir)
moving towards
moving away from player/other object
user defined path (up to eight)

FIRE ACTION BUTTON
No action
Player shoots: Player bullet options same as object
Player jumps: Jump path left, right and up programmable
max. char. falls

NEW FRAME CONDITIONS
All objects non existent
Fixed delay
Player exit definable plus selection of border colour

SCORING
Player eating
Player bullet eating
Object death
New frame start score

TITLE PAGE
Text input plus animated player and objects positioning

SAVE FACILITY
Save game
Save variation logic
Save player shape data
Save object shape data
Save bullet shape data

LOAD FACILITY
Load game
Load background
Load variation logic
Load player shape data
Load object shape data
Load bullet shape data

SAMPLE PROGRAMS:
MANICKOALA
EGGPACK
MS HORTENS

GOLD COLLECTION ■ GOLD COLLECTION ■ GOLD COLLECTION ■ GOLD COLLECTION ■

The Quill

48K Spectrum



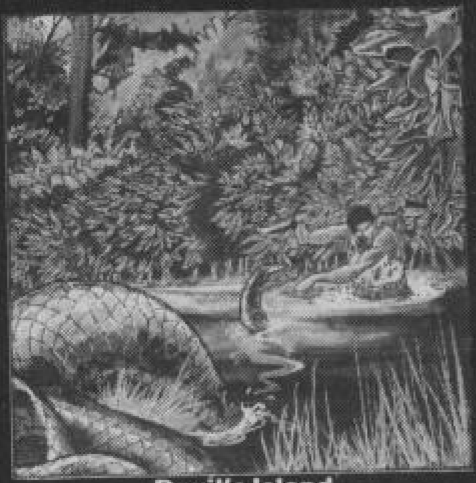
£14.95

The Quill is a major new utility written in machine code which allows even the novice programmer to produce high-speed machine code adventures of superior quality to many available at the moment without any knowledge of machine code whatsoever.
Using a menu selection system you may create well over 200 locations, describe them and connect routes between them. You may then fill them with objects and problems of your choice. Having tested your adventure you may alter and experiment with any section with the greatest of ease
A part formed adventure may be saved to tape for later completion. When you have done so The Quill will allow you to produce a copy of your adventure which will run independently of the main Quill editor, so that you may give copies away to your friends. The Quill is provided with a detailed tutorial manual which covers every aspect of its use in writing adventures.

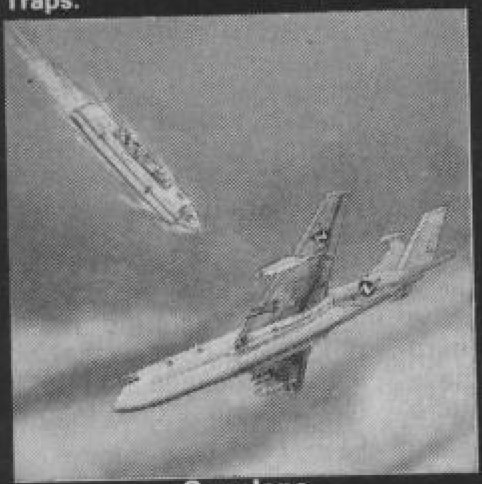
From The Golden Nib Of The Quill Comes a Gourmet Feast for Hungry Adventurers Volume 1 of the GOLD COLLECTION



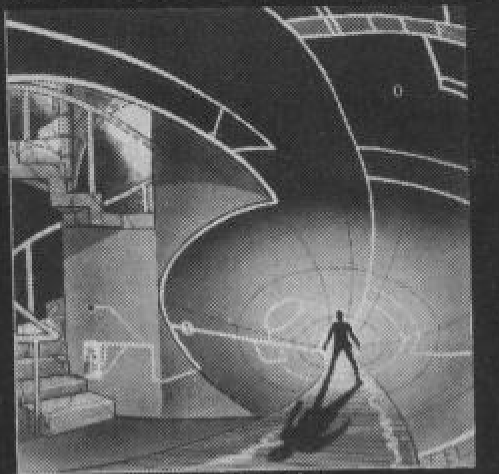
Magic Castle
Rescue the Princess from the Magic Castle but beware of Vampires and Booby Traps.



Devil's Island
Escape from the infamous prison maybe impossible, but what alternative have you?



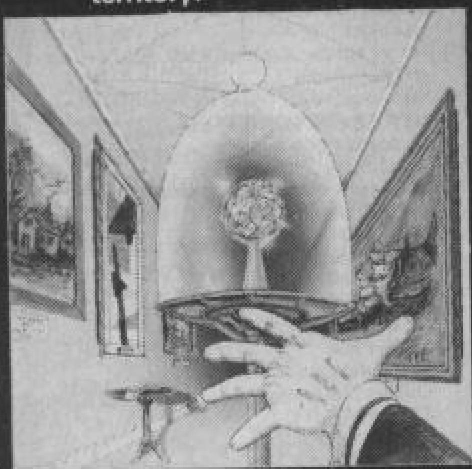
Spyplane
Can you survive and complete your mission high in the sky over enemy territory?



Mindbender
Only you alone can save the world from the terrible power of the Mindbender.

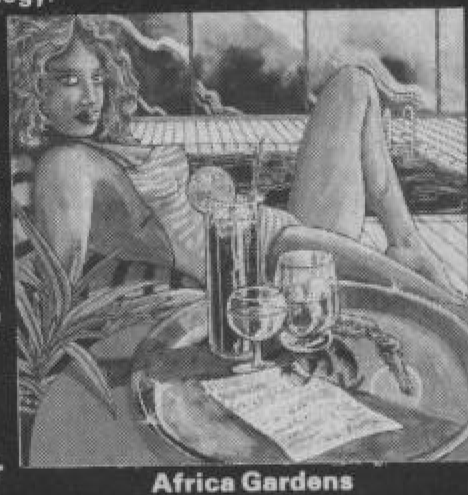


Barsak The Dwarf
Help Barsak recover the treasures of his ancestors from the underworld of mythology.



Diamond Trail
Where in this city of death and intrigue is the stolen Sinclive Diamond?

A Superb collection of adventures for the 48K Spectrum written with the Quill.
From the fertile imaginations of many authors, we have selected this fine volume of adventures for you to collect. Each adventure is complete in itself and is presented in the distictive livery of the series to grace your software shelf as you build up the collection.
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LIVING GUIDE
TO SPECTRUM SOFTWARE





Crash Guide Game of the Month

One of the classics

Pheenix

by Megadodo

Pheenix is 99% accurate as a copy of the arcade original, and includes 5 screens with 5 skill levels. The entry skill level can be chosen by the player (level 1 is slowish, level 5 is very, very fast). A demo mode will run if the keyboard is left alone for a short time. There are no instructions on playing the game, so watch this demo very carefully.

Once the various options have been chosen the game begins with a tuneful melody — just like the arcade original; even the scrolling stars have not been forgotten. In screen 1 (your craft appears at the bottom of course) very colourful birds form up on the screen, one or two breaking formation to attack you. For defence a laser cannon is supplied and an electro force field comes as standard.

Screen 2 is very much like the first but the birds are a different colour (flapping wings as well) and they attack you more frequently, but you can shoot more quickly now. On screen 3 you will get a surprise when you start to shoot the weaving eggs — they split open with the points awarded inside, the two halves of the egg shooting off to either side of the screen just as in the original. After three passes of the eggs over the screen, the birds inside hatch out, flapping creatures, each with a mind of its own. Now the force field comes into its own, saving you from the deadly bombs and their kamikaze attacks. One thing though, the barrier can only be active for a certain length of time before it needs recharging. These birds certainly don't like you, and will sacrifice their lives for yours if necessary.

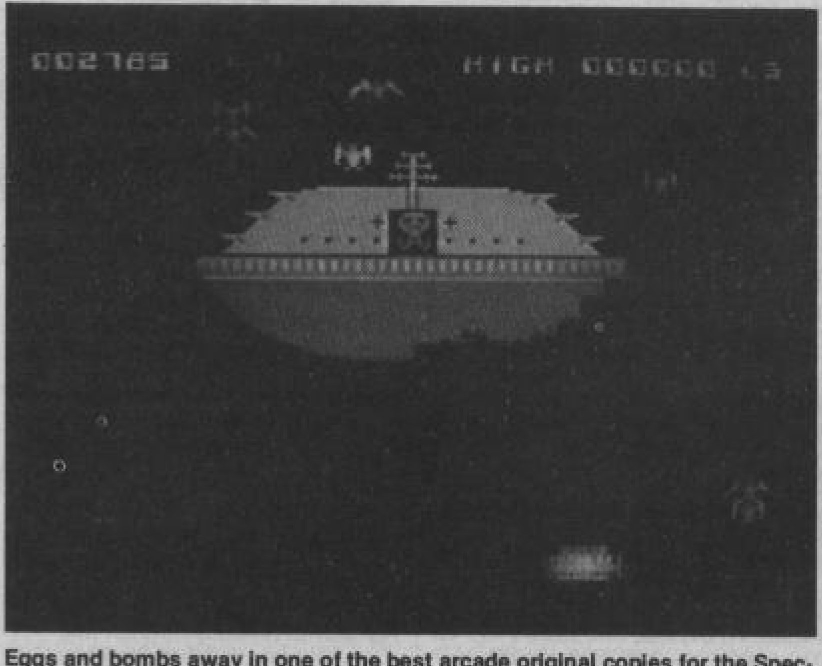
Screen 4 is a copy of the third screen except for the colour difference. There are the eggs again, but the resulting birds are even more lethal for it. On both this screen and screen 3, giving a bird an indirect hit causes it to yelp — great!!

Screen 5, and on to the **Mothership.** The object is to shoot away the protection barrier beneath the ship and kill the mother bird inside. Of course, she isn't going to let you get away with this, so she throws loads of cluster bombs at you. The Mothership is also protected by highly dangerous birds, which not only swoop at you, dropping as many as twelve bombs at a time but they'll also kamikaze you if the bombs don't kill you off. Screen 5 is very difficult to complete, but if you do, then a tuneful and visual display congratulates you and you return to screen 1 with the game speeded up.

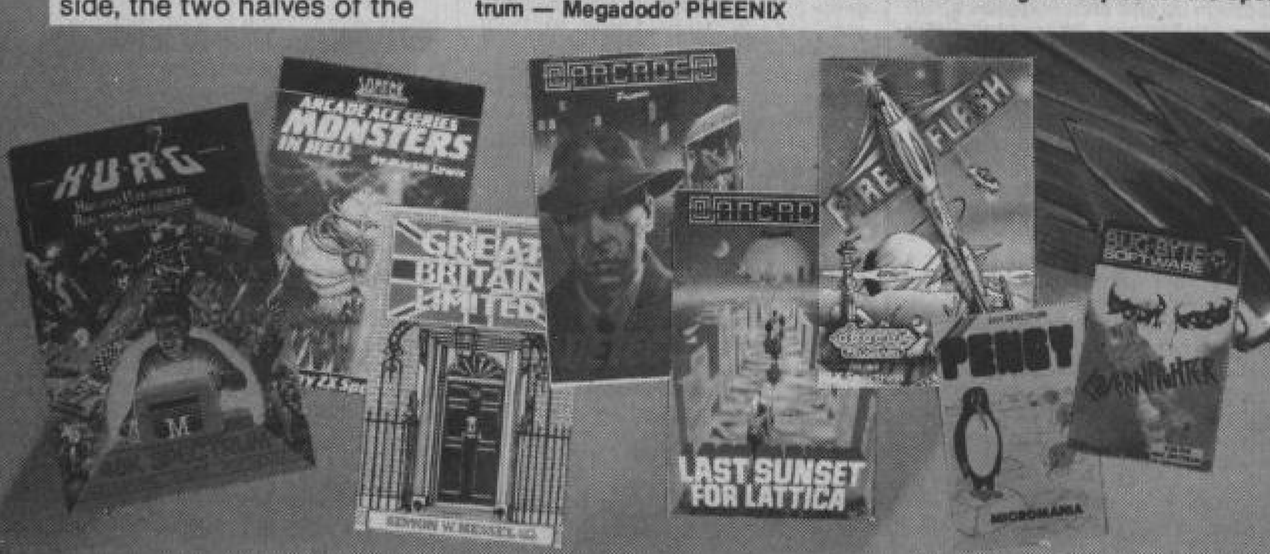
All the details of the original have been included and I was very impressed with the way the birds flapped their wings and with the explosions. The sound appears to have been faithfully reproduced, and the Spectrum has been pushed a long way with this game — and what's so appealing is that it has all been fitted into 16K. If you haven't got it, definitely a game to add to your collection.

Matthew Uffindell

Pheenix is produced by Megadodo for the 16K Spectrum, priced £5.50 it may me played with a Kempston or AGF joystick.



Eggs and bombs away in one of the best arcade original copies for the Spectrum — Megadodo' PHEENIX





Due to the enormous amount of games which have been pouring from the keyboards of software houses over the past few months, the CRASH SPECTRUM GUIDE has already grown beyond our original expectations. After consulting several of you at the 10th. ZX Microfair we have decided to split the guide up into two sections, each printed alternate months. The alternative to this would have been to start cutting down the entries, which we felt would rob the guide of some of its value. Therefore, this month we have the arcade section (see list of headings below), and next month's guide headings include Cards, Boards & Gambling, Sports Simulations, Simulations, Strategies, Adventures and Utilities. In this way we aim to keep the Crash Guide up to the standard we have already set without it becoming too unwieldy.

Programs are listed under convenient headings with the programs listed alphabetically by title. The software house is shown, together with the memory required, the retail price and author where known. The figure in brackets after the price indicates the issue of CRASH in which a full review for the game may be found (where it exists). Please note that references to joystick provisions invariably refer to the type of interface that may be used.

INVADER/ GALAXIAN/ PHOENIX

Space Invaders began it all and the more sophisticated Galaxian and Phoenix games continued it. Some of the games listed under this heading are among the oldest available for the Spectrum. Consequently some versions have not stood the test of time as well as others. In Invaders seried ranks of varied aliens jiggle across the screen getting lower and lower. Galaxians attack in lesser numbers but make up for it by swooping all over the place in an unsportsmanlike manner. Phoenix games are similar, but the aliens are bird-like, there are eggs to hit, often meteors as well, and finally a mothership to destroy. In the main most versions are very alike and it comes down to a matter of personal choice.

ARCADIA
Producer: Imagine, 16K £5.50
Generally considered to be the best shoot 'em up game around. Aliens come in droves from the right, each wave more suicidal than the last. Continuous fire and thrust (to half the screen height only) with good keyboard positions. Excellent hi-res smooth graphics. Joystick: Kempston (and softlink II) or Fuller. Addictive and difficult to master.

LIST OF HEADINGS

- Invader/Galaxian/Phoenix
- Asteroids & Space Games
- Scramble/Defender/
- Missile Command
- Cockpit Games
- Maze Games
- Ghost Gobbling
- Platform Games
- Creepie-Crawlies
- Froggers
- Grid Games
- Painters
- Trekkies
- Arcade Miscellaneous



ASTRO BLASTER
Producer: Quicksilva, 16K £4.95
Author: John Edwards
Quicksilva's go at galaxian/phoenix is creditably fast and difficult to master, featuring five attack waves in three phases — Cybird, Meteor and Plasma, each of which have their own characteristics. Oddly enough the first wave is the most difficult. You're given five shields. Graphics and sound are neat. Joystick: Kempston.

THE BIRDS
Producer: Rabbit, 16K £5.99 (2)
This is a straightforward shoot em up with a left/right moving laser base and three types of birds which hover, flap and sweep down on you. Points scored relate to the type of bird hit and for hitting the bombs which all three types drop on you. Additionally, a duck flies across the top of the screen from time to time. The birds have a nasty habit of turning into bombs when hit, which makes it necessary to have a good 'getaway' technique. Reasonable graphics if a bit jerky and plenty of sound. General feeling was that there's not enough in this game to make it very addictive or a better buy than most established shoot em ups. Simple control keys, joystick: Sinclair 2, overall CRASH rating 49% m/c.

COSMIC GUERILLA
Producer: Crystal, 16K £5.50
This game is a copy of an arcade shoot 'em up and almost makes a category of its own. Aliens stand in several vertical columns on either side of the screen. The centre block is a stack of humans and your three space ships (and lives). Your ship is at the base, firing up. Aliens zip across to the centre, grab a human and abduct him to the side. Eventually they can get at the three ships and steal those. For each one they get to the side you lose a life. Too rapid fire shortens the range so it's better to be accurate than fast. Features fast motherships that zip along the base just above your head and fire at you, rapid mutants and six difficulty levels. Joystick: Kempston. Recommended.

FIREBIRDS
Producer: Softek, 16K £5.95
Author: Graeme Devine
A classic phoenix. Fire rate and left/right movement are the best we've seen. Beautiful graphics featuring red Firebirds, blue Bombers, and white Weavers in an intricate dance of death. 100 percent machine code. Very difficult to get to see the mothership, but worth it! Highly recommended.

FIREHAWKS
Producer: Postern, 16K £6.95 (1)
Author: D Hoskins & C Davies
Firehawks is literally a Phoenix game but practically it's an Invader mutation. Your mission is to defend your planet from the deadly Firehawks of the title. They come in search of energy, and should one be allowed to land it turns into a giant Phoenix and flaps away — end of game. The birds line up at the top of the screen and you fire up with your laser beam. In the way are plasma screens which resemble decorative breeze blocks. The birds have to get round them and you must shoot them away to get at the birds. Graphics are quite large but there's no animation, and despite the 15 skill levels and 15 speeds it doesn't add up to much and is overpriced. No joystick option, poor control key response, good sound, generally fair. Overall CRASH rating 51%. BASIC + some code.



GALACTIC ABDUCTORS
Producer: Anirog, 16K £5.95
This version features large animated graphics. The aliens weave fanciful patterns when attacking and have the cute habit of eating your population when you're not looking, only throwing back their skulls. 100 percent machine code. Hi-score. Joystick option.

GALACTIC TROOPER
Producer: Romik, 16K £5.99
Author: Ian Morrison
Halfway between an invader and galaxian type, this three skill level game offers reasonably attractive graphics and plenty of them. You're at the base firing up at ten bomb racks containing five aliens per rack. Above them a mothership floats lazily from left to right and back again. To hit it you must blast out all five aliens from a rack so you can fire through the gap. Aliens reproduce fast! For more points there are a few saucers that venture out, but they're easy to hit. The aliens drop bombs on you but the screen is so full that the dropping distance is small and they are hard to dodge. Skill doesn't appear to be a factor, rather luck. Hi-score. Joystick: Kempston or Sinclair, machine code, only average value for money.

GALAKZIONS
Producer: Mikrogen, 16K £5.95
One of the weaker games with three skill levels and attackers more resembling invader aliens than anything else. The rate of continuous fire is wrong for the slow attack patterns, robbing the game of any excitement. Works with Mikrogen II joystick. Machine code. One or two player games.

GALAXIANS
Producer: Artic, 16K £4.95
A good copy and a classic version. with nine levels of play, hi-score, personalised scoring, one or two playere games. Features swooping Galaxians and hi-res explosions. Joystick: Kempston. Machine code. Very good value for money.

HAWKS
Producer: Lotus-Soft, 16K £5.50 (1)
Author: Derek Jones
This is a pretty hefty shoot em up where you're pitted against waves of hawks which drop eggs. These eggs hatch out in the ground and become mutant hawks which form up for later attacks. You are in control of an old Asteroid Mining Vehicle which can fire missiles at the birds and falling eggs, a laser and also lay mines over the downed eggs. These also blow up the vehicle if they go off under it. There are a large number of control keys so speed and reflexes are of the essence. Good colours and graphics, plenty to do and exciting to play. Good control key positions and reasonable sound, multiple skill levels. Joystick: Kempston/Datel, Sinclair 2, Protek or AGF. General rating, good & addictive, overall CRASH rating 75%. 100% M/C.

HEADBANGER
Producer: Llamasoft, 48K £4.95
Llamasoft is one of those companies that got famous fast, though looking at this game one wonders why. The sky is raining hammers (makes a change from ravening aliens I suppose) and Chico must carry bags of money from one side of the screen to the other under the partial shelter of four blocks which are being eroded by the falling hammers. In between the shelters Chico can nut the hammers for points, but after ten he gets a headache and must then nut a red aspirin hammer. Hammers hitting his body instead of his head lose a life. Getting a money bag across safely restores one shelter. Badly put together and rather pointless.

I'M IN SHOCK
Producer: Artic, 16K £4.95
The inlay, uncharacteristically for Artic, is way over the top in description! This is a grid/shoot em up. Alien craft inhabit the top squares between the fine grid and you have a laser base at the bottom, moving left and right. Between you and the aliens are reflecting mirrors at 45°. These are sometimes in singles, sometimes in ranks, and they deflect your shots off at right angles. The trick is to use several ranks of these reflectors to shoot up,

across then up again to hit the aliens. There is a command ship which crosses the screen every now and again for bonus points. The aliens move from square to square horizontally, also descending slowly. Small graphics and over-responsive control on the laser base which makes it difficult to line up shots accurately. An orginal idea, reasonably playable, perhaps not terribly addictive though. Simple control keys, no joystick option — fair to average, overall CRASH rating 55% m/c.

INVADERS
Producer: Artic, 16K £4.95
Although this is a standard and close copy of the original, the hi-res graphics stand up quite well to the test of time. Nine levels of play and four variations of alien.

INVASION FORCE
Producer: Artic, 16K £4.95
Artic's engaging and addictive phoenix game has the mothership protected by a force field hovering above your base. Should your missiles hit it they are returned back as three! The mothership is only vulnerable in its control centre. There are loads of bomb-dropping aliens flapping around. Three lives, two skill levels and harder screens. Neat touch — if your base is hit the Artic lorry rushes out to repair it between lives. Generally recommended.



KAMIKAZE
Producer: A&F, 16K £5.75
Basically a galaxian game. Pit your wits against wave after wave of suicidal fighter aircraft which swoop down on you dropping bombs. Clear two screens and you get a bonus screen against easy-to-hit helicopters before returning to the main feature. Graphics are attractive if a bit flickery and the mushroom shaped explosions are good. Continuous sound of attacking aircraft unless you drown them out with the sound of your continuous fire. Hall of fame, no joystick option.

LASERWARP
Producer: Mikrogen, 48K £5.95 (2)
Author: C Hinsley
This is a very simple but effective shoot em up 'Galaxian' type game. Your laser base is assaulted by loads and loads of different alien types which fill the screen with weaponry — the red 'heat seeking' missiles are particularly mean. If you can survive 10 attack waves you are left facing 'The Master'. It works well as a shoot em up and keeps you very busy. In general the graphics are very good with plenty of colour and there is reasonable sound. The inlay claims user-definable keys but there aren't any and you don't need them anyway. No joystick option, 5 skill levels (speeds), 3 lives and progressively difficult if you get through the 11 screens. Overall CRASH rating 77% m/c.

PARATROOPERS
Producer: Rabbit, 16K £5.99 (2)
Author: J F Cain
In this game you are manning an anti-aircraft gun, while overhead clouds of helicopters are dropping paratroopers on you. The gun only traverses left and right, but because of the clever cheat on perspective it gives a field of fire across the top two thirds of the screen. You must hit helicopters and paratroopers. These fall from their choppers sometimes with chute opening instantly, others delaying till the last second, and others never opening at all, to die splat on the ground. You will lose a life if a para lands on top of you, or when three have landed successfully and gone off to fetch a giant tank against which there is no defence. The graphics are good, amusing and smooth (gun works very well) and it's all fairly fast, but the general feeling was that there weren't enough objectives in the game to make it totally compelling and addictive. User-defined keys, only 1 skilll level, overall CRASH rating 62% m/c.

PHEENIX
Producer: Megadodo, 16K £5.50
We've been very remiss in leaving this game out of the Guide. Megadodo's Pheenix is a very close copy of the arcade original and has, for some time, been one of the most popular versions around. It features a laser base with force field for protection (no shooting when it's in its timed operation), eggs, various flapping birds and a very large Mothership, the underside of which must be worn away in traditional style before making it vulnerable to your fire. There are 5 screens and 5 skill levels (speeds). The graphics are very smooth and quite large, sound is inventive and continuous. The game can actually be easier to play at the higher speeds. If you like shoot em ups, this is a must for your collection and very good value at the price. 100% machine code, sensible keys and Kempston joystick.

SPACE INTRUDERS
Producer: Quicksilva, 16K £4.95
A close copy of Invaders with rather small graphics that work in character blocks. Fast but out of date.

SPACE RAIDERS
Producer: Psion, 16K £4.95
Another close Invaders copy with better graphics than Space Intruders, but slower and not particularly addictive to play.

SPACE ZOMBIES
Producer: Mikrogen, 16K £5.95
One critic thought this was pathetic, another liked it. Certainly a 'quaint' game. You're at the screen base firing up at a bunch of highly coloured alien zombies which chug about the screen like a train, getting longer with each screen. The graphics are big, there's continuous fire, a nice moving star background, and the main feature is the erratic and highly unpredictable movement of the aliens. Three speeds, one or two player games, plenty of levels (at least six before I got killed off). Joystick: Mikrogen II, good value but not terribly addictive.

STARCLASH
Producer: Micromega, 16K £6.95 (2)
Author: Derek Brewster
Not, perhaps, Derek's best effort, but still a worthy addition to this section of games. Fight your way through 4 waves of enemy fighter craft to reach the Mothership and then place a bolt of laser power in whichever of her two power cores is active. The large graphics work very well, the ships peeping coyly into the screen from the top as the serried ranks make their jiggly way downward. Additional hazards are thrown at you in the form of flaming meteors which come down from between the attacking enemy ships, and the fact that the enemy fire power homes in your laser base so you can't sit still for a second. General rating was above usual galaxian/invader game standard, a good version of 'Altair'. Simple keys, joystick: Kempston, progressive difficulty, CRASH overall rating 69% m/c.

TERROR DAKTIL 3D
Producer: Melbourne House, 48K £6.95
Not, you might think by the title, a galaxian/invader type game, but it is really. There's a 3D landscape and 2D massed Daktils in the distance moving jsut like space invaders. To hit them you must get the dimensional trajectory of your 'battered' cannon correct. Frequently one will swoop down on you in very good animated line drawing. You get more points for hitting the swooping ones, but it's safer to dodge them. Not up to Melbourne House's usual standard and the sound — what happened to it?

THE DETECTIVE
Producer: Arcade, 48K £5.50
Another game which sounds unlikely as a galaxian type contender, but then, we couldn't quite figure what the title had to do with the game. But it is a good game anyway. Nice packaging as usual from Arcade and reflected in the graphics. Avoid the falling objects which change characteristic by level or shoot them for points. Tyres (?!) form up like thunderclouds and fall on you, a wretched dog keeps stealing your points. Avoid him by using the wrap-around screen. 25 levels. Joystick: Kempston and AGF or Protek. Good value.

WINGED AVENGER
Producer: Workforce, 16K £5.00
Something of a cult among galaxian fans, with two options (2-part load) for the 'brave' and 'also-rans'. Six skill levels, laser, forcefield barrier and simple but effective graphics. This is a fast game for the experts — novices might not even realise they've lost all their lives. Disappointing graphics and ultimately not of lasting appeal.

BLACK HOLE
Producer: Fantasy, 16K £5.50
Centre screen is the Black Hole, from which emerge three types of alien craft. Two of your weapons are deflected by the force of the Black Hole, which makes aiming difficult, and the third weapon has a limited range. Indiscriminate shooting leads to loss of power, and the aliens fire back. To make matters worse there is space debris to avoid on the left of screen, the area to which you're confined. Control in eight directions, but too many keys make this game hard to enjoy, and there are too many for a joystick to handle.

BLOCKADE RUNNER
Producer: Thorn EMI, 16K £6.95 (1)
Author: Graham Johns
You're in this supply ship, running the blockade of earth by some nasty aliens and there are 5 layers of defences to get through. First a dense shower of meteors which can be dodged or shot, then a layer of vertical laser barriers which you must dodge, then tractor beam units try to pull you off course, finally a fleet of alien ships try to blast you to kingdom come. You must then transfer your cargo pods to an earth ship. Control response is frightenly fast and violent—it has to be to dodge the laser beams. Pity the control keys are laid out for the Sinclair joystick—they're very awkward. A popular game for shoot em up addicts with plenty of playability, but maybe lacking in great lasting appeal. Joystick: Sinclair, Kempston. 6 skill levels, 5 lives. CRASH rating: fairly good, overall 63% M/C.

COSMIC DEBRIS
Producer: Artic, 48K £4.95
An archetypal 'asteroids' game with hardly any colour at all. Hollow outlines for the asteroids which shatter into smaller fragments when hit. Rotate, thrust and hyperspace and typically nasty flying saucers that appear when you don't need them. Two speeds (fast and suicidal — and they mean it!) with bonus ships for points. A game this fast should have continuous fire facility, but doesn't. No popular joystick facility. Good value for asteroid addicts who like a fast game.



ASTEROIDS/SPACE

With some exceptions, Asteroid type games tend to be less colourful than most arcade programs – some are virtually black and white, but the category is still one of the most popular. Also included under this heading are 'space' games which have very little to do with asteroids.

CONFUSION
Producer: Blaby, 58K £4.95
There's something of a 'frogger' feel to this ultra-fast game. Alien ships zip along parallel tracks which you must traverse, shooting them for points. Impossible without a joystick and difficult with, goes with Kempston or AGF or Protek. Generally less than one expects from the usually excellent Blaby people.

DEEP SPACE
Producer: PSS, 48K £5.95
A standard version of asteroids with rotate left and right, thrust, hyperspace and fire, wrap around screen and alien ships. Can't comment on the game's quality since none of our three review copies would load.

GUIDE SPECTRUM



THE GUARDIAN
Producer: PSS, 48K £5.95 (2)
The gateway to the anti-matter world of Migon is actually an oblong grid line with radiating lines from an off-centred inner square. Your ship whizzes at amazing speed round the outer edge of the outer grid, firing inwards at (first) enemy ships which come outward, one to a segment and which will destroy you if you are still on that segment when it reaches the edge, (second) at meteors and (third) at more enemy ships plus an energy force which zips around the inner edge of the grid line getting closer and closer to you. It has a specialist appeal for those who like simple asteroidal games played at an almost insane speed and that require split second timing skills.
Reasonaole use of colour in the very small graphics, an ample selection of control keys, joystick: Kempston. Progressive difficulty, fast and medium addictive. Overall CRASH rating 68% m/c.

JETPAC
Producer: Ultimate, 16K £5.50
There's not much can be said about Ultimate that hasn't already been said. Graphics and presentation are of the highest standard. In Jetpac you must get your spaceman to assemble a rocket and fuel it, steal as many gems as you can and avoid the irate aliens or kill them with the laser. When assembled the rocket takes off for another planet to plunder. Re-assemble the ship after five planets. Five levels of different aliens. Joystick: Kempston. One or Two player games, continuous fire and movement in eight directions. Highly recommended.

KOSMIC PIRATE
Producer: Blaby, 48K £4.95
There's a factory below on the planet which you must plunder, guiding your ship through the heavy alien space traffic. deceptively simply looking game with good graphics and sound and really a 'frogger' variant. M/C. Joystick: Kempston.

METEOROIDS
DK Tronics, 16K £4.95
In a way it's as well this game is in the cheaper bracket because it isn't a very good programme. The graphics are jerky in movement and the relative speed of craft to asteroids is too slow. Worst of all you can only use one function at a time so you can't fire while rotating or thrusting. There is a useful 'redefine' function which allows you to change keyboard options and alter the way in which the game plays. No joystick facility, unless redefined to cursor keys to use AGF or Protek.

METEOR STORM
Quicksilva, 16K £4.95
Mercifully, Quicksilva have proved their originality in the games field by going onto games which make this one look as silly as it is. If you like asteroid games then this is pretty fast. Simple outlines hover in a blank black space. Ship orientation is in eight directions using all the number keys which means you can't concentrate on the game.

MISSION IMPOSSIBLE
Producer: Silversoft, 16K £5.95 (1)
Author: Jeremy Brown
This is a Lander type game where you must guide your craft down to a planet's surface and rescue stranded astronauts or miners or something and return them to the mothership above. To get down to the planet you must dodge your way through the masses of asteroids, and then return through layers of enemy shipping. Controls provide a retro rocket for braking, important when landing as an inaccurate or fast landing results in death. On the return journey the retro becomes a gun to shoot at the aliens. On higher levels there is also a force field as a added hazard. Throughout, the graphics are very good and move smoothly. Thus is a very difficult game and bound to be addictive. Takes time to get good at it. Sensible control keys, joystick: AGF, Protek or Kempston. 3 playing speeds, over 50 screens, generally recommended. Overall CRASH rating 80% M/C.

PLANETOIDS
Producer: Psion, 16K £4.95
A very good copy and a classic version with the best graphics of the lot. Nice bright yellow asteroids which shatter satisfyingly. A bit slow, although the shattered fragments change direction and move faster. Alien ships are well defined graphically. Using Z/X for rotation and SPACE/ENTER for fire/thrust is quite good, but H for hyperspace takes some getting to in an emergency. No skill levels, which means the addictivity rating is low, but good value at the price. No joystick option.

SCHIZOIDS
Producer: Imagine, 16K £5.50
Imagine come up with some of the best games — this isn't one of them. You're supposed to clear the space lanes of civilisation's debris by bulldozing it into a black hole in the centre of the screen. The graphics are black and white, though nicely drawn but the game is confusing. Joystick: Fuller.



SENTINEL
Producer: Abacus, 16K £5.00
Author: Kevin Flynn
Prevent the enemy from attacking the five Sentinel space stations with your four ships. Careful though — your three remaining ships (lives) are docked with the station so if your protective screen isn't effective you can lose lives before you've even had a chance to use them! Enemy comes in various forms and meteroids make life impossible at times. Your weapons are laser and a guided missile so you have to contend with left/right rotation, thrust, laser fire, missile fire and two controls for guiding it, which makes Sentinel a game for the four-handed player! Oh, and there's a force field for the station — five-handed player! A good fast and furious game. Good value. No joystick option.

SHUTTLE
Producer: Blaby, 48K £5.95
Take your shuttle craft from the mothership and descend to two specially created landing spaces on the planet's hilly surface to rescue the stranded astronauts, which stand on the hillsides waving their arms frantically. You can only take one at a time and landing results in the nearest dashing to your craft and partial safety. Unfortunately the sky is crowded with bi-directional meteors. The graphics are cute and the sound very good, but theinlay card suggests you can fire at something when you can't. Avoiding the meteors is simply done by dodging them (a sort of frogger). Not the most addictive of Blaby's games, but still very playable. Joystick: Kempston, AGF or Protek.

SPECTROID STORM
Producer: Abersoft, 48K £4.95
A very new asteroid game and one of the most colourful with a pretty packed screen. Wrap around action and multi-shaped objects. Good acceleration and braking but requires a tender touch as the action is quite violent. Hyperspace, no difficulty levels. It looks good but it needs more playability to put it in the top rank. Joystick: Kempston,AGF or Protek.

3 DEEP SPACE
Producer: Postern, 16K £7.95 (1)
This is the, by now, famous real 3D game which uses red and blue spectacles to create a three dimensional feeling. Sadly the effect doesn't come off at all, with few people reporting any success with the effect. On top of that, the game itself is not sufficiently exciting enough to be worth the very high price asked. Basically your ship moves vertically at the left of screen, confronting the alien ships which move from right to left. You can 'zoom' in and out of the screen to match the depth of the attacking vessels. 6 control keys, no joystick option, smooth movement but not colourful and only average sound. Overall CRASH rating M/C.

VIOLENT UNIVERSE
Producer: Fantasy, 16K £5.50
This game has an essential difference — instead of firing ahead, you lay gas clouds behind you to destroy the aliens. The aliens are made of anti-matter, so as they rush headling into your vapour clouds they're anihilated. You must score 1000 points within 40 seconds to get to the next level, an idea which makes this game extremely addictive to play. Wrap around screen, 8-directional movement in a very crowded screen. Hiding inside one of your vapour clouds is a sneaky way of avoiding death. Joystick: Kempston, AGF, Protek, Fuller or Mikrogen II. Good value.



SCRAMBLE/ DEFENDER/ MISSILE DEFENCE

For many arcade enthusiasts defender and scramble games are the kings of flying, shoot 'em ups. They require quick reflexes and excellent hand/eye control. Of the home computer they demand programs with sensible control key layouts or joysticks for good results. In scramble games you fly a mission against a hidden enemy base, whereas as in defender games you must rescue humanity at the same time. In either case the game is played in profile, showing the topography of the ground over which you are flying. Missile defence is simpler, showing missile traces descending on your cities. You must guide the anti-missile defence by sighting cross hairs at the leading points of the enemy missile traces.

ARMAGEDDON
Producer: Ocean, 16K £5.90
This version is a classic missile defence game with excellent graphics, especially the sunburst explosions. The missile traces split into several traces, coming thicker and faster with each wave. The available number of missiles in your armoury for each wave is shown at the base of the screen and above that are your six cities which you are protecting. After each attack wave the program updates your score and cities left. Nice title graphics and 'end' card. Recommended.

ARMAGEDDON
Producer: Silversoft, 16K £5.95 (1)
Author: C Knight
Silversoft's version of the much-copied 'Missile Command' arcade original is well up to scratch with good use of colour, and average sound. The graphics are simple but effective with very nice explosions and a suitably disgusting frying sound to accompany them. Features six cities, three missile bases, aircraft and bomb-dropping satellites,a nd heat sensitive missiles which hover above a detonation until it's safe to descend further. Gets increasingly fast, medium addictive, sensible control keys and Kempston joystick (via a 2-part load). Overall CRASH rating 68% M/C.



COSMIC RAIDERS
Producer: Mikrogen, 16K £5.95
You must race across the planet and destroy the alien master ships in the lair. The cityscape beneath is densely populated and green grabbers keep abducting the humans. Knock out the aliens with smart bombs, but then you must catch the falling humans before they splat. Hosts of other alein fighters threaten you. Features long range scan, reverse. Long range shows the whole distance to travel. Keyboard positioning is sensible, which is as well, as this game does not have a joystick facility.

CRUISE ATTACK
Producer: Mikrogen, 48K £5.95 (2)
Author: C Hinsley
Mikrogen actually say in their inlay that this is a copy of 'Missile Command', and itut to be a respectable version. Six cities but only two independently firing laser bases, and incoming torpedoes as well as missiles. The graphics are very good, one reviewer actually thought they were better than the arcade original, especially the explosions. No user-defined keys despite the inlay claiming it, but reasonable keys provided. Joystick; Mikrogen. Sadly only one skill level. Above average, overall CRASH rating 65% M/C.

DEFENDAR
Producer: Mikrogen, 48K £5.95
Author: C Hinsley
The title says it all, and it turns out to be a pretty classic looking 'Defender' game with the familiar zig-zag outline landscape, waving humans, and assorted alien craft. There is the radar screen at the top as well. Control is quite good with sensible keys allowing for thrust, reverse, laser and smart bombs as well as a hyperspace facility. But there is something lacking in the feel and play. Perhaps it's the speed which seems slow compared to other versions combined with the fact that it seems quite easy to play. Inlay states user-definable keys, but there aren't any. Good, bright graphics and reasonable sound. Overall CRASH rating 63% M/C.

EARTH DEFENCE
Producer: Artic, 16K £4.95 (2)
Author: Donald Campbell
Another 'Missile Command' of course. Six cities, three missile silos, no satellites or torpedoes. A useful feature is the cross hair sight which leaves an after image when the firing key is pressed while the main sight dashes off somewhere else on the screen. Fairly simple looking graphics and a very fast version. Pity, then, that the control keys are badly placed 6/7/8/9 and 0. 3 skill levels, joystick: Kempston, Sinclair 2. Above average, overall CRASH rating 63% M/C.

FIREFLASH
Producer: Abacus, 16K £5.95 (1)
Author: K Flynn
This is a very superior 'Missile Command' style game and a games designer in one — another from the specialists in games for eight-fingered players. Your base has 4 missile launch pads supplied by underground tunnels, and 2 laser bases at either end of the screen. Incoming alien missiles split into 4 small and hard to hit warheads if not destroyed quickly. You must select the launch pad required, fire the missile, guide it to its target and detonate it at the correct moment. If that's not enough, low flying alien craft bomb your installations. If you like a fast, difficult to master game, then this is for you. But many factors can be modified by the clever POKE facility which allows you to redesign the game to suit your own taste. On the reverse side is a free game called 'Destroyer'. Uses 6 control keys, no joystick option, excellent graphics, recommended. CRASH overall rating 78% M/C.

GROUND ATTACK
Producer: Silversoft, 16K £5.95
This is similar to 'Penetrator' by Melbourne House, but is nowhere as good a program. It's the sister game to 'Orbiter'. Here you must attack the aliens in their underground caverns. Weapons are bombs and laser and there are fuel dumps for points. Thrust and decelerate and nine skill levels (different speeds of play) with the cursor keys and 9 and 0 for direction and fire, which is not the best arrangement. No joystick facility. There are better value games around of this type.

INVASION OF THE BODY SNATCHAS
Producer: Crystal, 48K £6.50 (1)
A word of warning — this game (indeed all new Crystal programs) has a special loader which makes you think it isn't loading properly. It is a classic copy of the famous arcade original and features Landers, Bombers, Mutants, Swarmers and Pods. There is an excellent radar screen, one you can really use for lining up shots, and spectacular explosion graphics. Sadly unless you own a Fuller Box, the game is totally silent. As usual with 'Defender' games, there is not much colour, but the graphics are fast and smooth. All in all probably the best version for the Spectrum yet. Rather awkward control keys; Z/X left/right and N/M up/down, A to G fire laser, H to ENTER smart bombs. Joystick: AGF, Protek, Kempston, Fuller. CRASH rating, playable and addictive, overall 70% M/C.

KRAKATOA
Producer: Abbex, 48K £5.95 (2)
Author: Paul Reynolds
One of our Games of the Month last issue, and deservedly so. This lively game boasts tons of well graphics with animation and humour thrown in. Your task as a chopper pilot is twofold, one to prevent enemy subs and V1 bombers from destroying the oil tanker anchored in the bay; and two, rescue people from the imminent eruption of the volcano on an island across the bay. When the tanker is hit its crew start to fling themselves overboard and also have to be rescued by lowering a rope. It's all very tricky, helped by a very good radar scanner and a forward firing gun on the chopper. When the fuel runs out, it's back to the helipad where a busy workman comes out and does the job (marvellous). A handful of keys is needed, not well explained, and the game is challenging, original and well worth the money. No joystick option. Generally rated as very good, highly recommended. Overall CRASH rating 83% m/c.

REPULSAR
Producer: Softek, 16K £5.95
Author: Andrew Beale
This is Softek's version of missile defence and it is a close copy of the original. It's graphics are nowehre near as good as Ocean's 'Armageddon'. On the other hand it does have the extra feature of plenty of enemy planes buzzing around to destroy as well as the missiles themselves and the explosions are satisfactory. It is also faster to play than Ocean's version, but somehow less fun. One side of this tape is for the keyboard (with a dreadful layout) and the other side is for the Kempston joystick. The inlay card doesn't tell you that key M is for fire. Eight directional movement, generally okay, but not as playable as Armageddon.

SCRAMBLE
Producer: Mikrogen, 16K £5.50
This is an enjoyable copy of the arcade original and a flexible program as you're given a 4-option menu (1 = missiles, 2 = UFOs, 3 = Meteors, 4 = Fortress) which means you can leap from part to part as you choose, or fight your way through the correct sequence if you're a showoff. Three speeds with the graphics a bit shaky on fast. Usual lasers, bombs, fuel dumps, missiles with a neat 2-option on returning to the next life where you left off, or changing landscape each time. The meteors are too difficult to be enjoyable, and the sound isn't amazing. No joystick option and the keys are a bit of a handful (2 = down, 4 = up, 6 = brake, 7 = thrust, 0 = laser) and all lower row are bombs. All in all fun to play and good value.



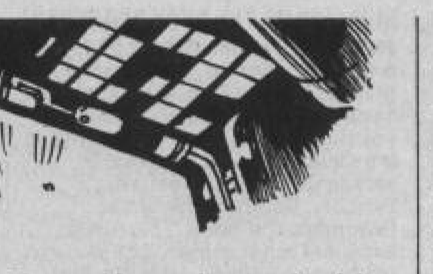
HARRIER ATTACK
Producer: Martech/Durrell, 16K £6.95
This game seemed to upset a lot of magazine reviewers because of its unstated reference to the Falklands War! Bad taste perhaps? In any event, a completely daft reason to give an excellent game a poor review. You must take off from an aircraft carrier, dodge guided missiles fired at you from an enemy ship, then fly over a heavily defended island, bombing the anti-aircraft guns, avoiding the enemy fighters and shooting them down. Keep your speed up or you'll run out of fuel before reaching the climactic bombing run on the town (Port Stanley perhaps?) Then it's back to the aircraft carrier to land. Fast responses and first rate graphics (the sun on the sea is particularly good). Five skill levels. Keys are cursor (pity) with zero to fire, nine to bomb and SPACE to eject. Joystick: Protek or AGF on the cursors. Highly recommended.

ORBITER
Producer: Silversoft, 16K £5.95
This is a much better game than Silversoft's 'Ground Attack' and is a good version of the classic 'Defender' of arcade fame. The animated graphics are neat and the sound amusing. Control keys are much better placed than in GA as well. Climb, dive, thrust, reverse, hyperspace, smart bombs and laser all help you protect the humanoids from the marauding alien craft. Features an excellent long range scan. No joystick facility. M/C.

PENETRATOR
Producer: Melbourne House, 48K £6.95
Probably the definitive 'scramble' game for the Spectrum. Four rings of defence surround the alien base, each with its own problems of landscale. Missiles take off continuously guided by radar units (excellent animation) which get more accurate if you fail to destroy enough of them. Special feature allows you to reprogram the game to make your own landscape and alter the enemy's defences. Highly recommended. Joystick: Kempsoft I.

ZAXXAN
Producer: Starzone, 48K £5.50 (1)
Author: N Mardon
With a change of one letter, the game everyone has wanted to get their hands on has reached the Spectrum at last and caused a stir at the 9th ZX Microfair where it was to be seen on the Crash Micro stand for the first time. The compiled machine code graphics are surprisingly smooth, considering how much detail has to keep scrolling diagonally across the screen. The object is to take your attack fighter through the increasingly dense defences and destroy the Zaxxan fort. Features gun emplacements, fuel dumps, enemy aircraft, laser beams and walls with force fields — and of course the shadow of your fighter on the floor. Colour is well used and the sound is fairly good. Good control keys and Kempston joystick. Good value for money, addictive to play and a must for 'Zaxxon' fans. Overall CRASH rating 74% M/C.





COCKPIT GAMES

There are now a number of programs which give you a forward view through the space ship's screen, enough to make a category of their own. We've decided to call these 'cockpit' games. This section does not include any of the 'Trek' games, which often have a viewscreen simulation, as they come under their own heading.

THE BLACK PLANET
Producer: Phipps Associates, 48K £5.95
Author: B G Cornhill
A mammoth game for wet Sundays. You'll need a printer or a note pad or a good memory, for the complex of instructions are on one side and the game on the other. Your task is to rid the space lanes of pirates whose home is on the Black Planet, which is invisible until you find the Key, which has been broken into seven parts and distributed on seven different planets, which each have a different arcade adventure, which each has different key instructions, which means you've got to know it all backwards! That said, it's tons of fun. The cockpit view with moving stars is very good. An instrument panel tells you where you are in space, where the star base is or the planets on which you must land. Navigating is quite difficult, but if you get it right the sight of a planet looming up is very cimenatic. You can land manually or use the auto-docking feature. Between planets you may well be attacked by the pirates who know you are after them, in which case you are into a furious dog fight. It's not a game for a few moments. Excellent value and highly recommended.

COSMOS
Producer: Abbex, 16K £5.95
The keyboard layout looks simple but is confusing to play with. The view screen shows your convoy, which you must protect. Enemy ships infest space and so do asteroids. You have two lasers with continuous fire. Movement adjusts the field of view to quite an extent but without a long range scan it's difficult to anticipate properly. The colours are fine, sound rather poor, but nevertheless, a game with good playability. Joystick: Kempston.

DIMENSION DESTRUCTORS
Producer: Artic, 48K £5.95 (2)
Author: J Ritman
'3D Combat Zone' in space — describes this game quite well. The pyramidal-shaped enemy craft form in clusters and swoop towards you in very effective hollow 3D. You line up the onrushing enemy in your sights and blast them to kingdom come with your twin-firing lasers. The graphics aren't very colourful, but they work very well and the ship control is pin-sharp in its responsiveness. Top marks for the 'Star Wars' like intro and titles. Exciting to play but perhaps not massively addictive. Reasonable control keys, joystick: Sinclair 2, Fuller, Kempston. Gets progressively harder the longer you play, rated above average to good, overall CRASH rating 68% m/c.

GALAXY ATTACK
Producer: Sunshine Books, 48K £5.95
This is a real zaparoony of a game with loads of playability, but be warned, you need to be an alien with three hands or a 15-digit Uruggian for keyboard control. The programme comes in three parts; in space as you approach the Uruggian's planet, you must destroy their waves of fighters by centering the sight cross hairs; then on the planet's surface, where your landed ship is surrounded by walkers and fighters; and then the finale attack on the orbiting mother ship. Control response is good, colour and sound excellent, and the simple response is good, colour and sound excellent, and the simple 3-dimensional aliens work well. Recommended. No joystick.

OMEGA RUN
Producer: CRL, 48K £5.95 (2)
Author: Richard Brisbourne
Fanatical elements have seized control of a doomsday bomb and it is timed to go off in 25 minutes. You must fly your fighter-bomber through heavy defences and destroy the building housing the bomb before it goes off and destroys the world. Your cockpit view shows the horizon, enemy fighters, laser beams and anti-aircraft explosions. Fighters get on your tail and you must alter course to bring them ahead and destroy them with your guns. This takes you off target line and the fuel tanker flying ahead of you with which you must rendezvous before completing the mission. Excellent on-screen instructions which demonstrate controls and instruments. This is a very busy game with 5 selectable skill levels and some customisation possible via a menu. Effective and colourful 3D graphics. Playable, addictive and recommended. Overall CRASH rating 87% m/c.

ROMMEL'S REVENGE
Producer: Crystal, 48K £6.50 (2)
Author: M S Horsley
This is probably the best version yet of the well known arcade original 'Battle Zone' and is, of course, similar to Artic's '3D Combat Zone'. In one sense it's much better — the flat plain is well landscaped and teeming with buildings, radar towers and telegraph poles. The missiles, once fired, seemed to travel at a realistic speed. In another sense it's not so good — the enemy tanks don't appear as frequently and there aren't any flying saucers to contend with. On the other hand the enemy tanks aren't so over-intelligent at avoiding your fire, so you get a better sense of achievement! Rather poor sound and the hollow 3D graphics are colourless, but it's fun just wandering round looking at the buildings. Watch out for the special loader routine which makes it look as though the program isn't loading properly. Reasonable keys, joystick: Kempston, Fuller, AGF, Protek. Rating: good, overall CRASH rating 65% m/c.

TIMEGATE
Quicksilva, 48K £6.95
Excellent moving star backgrounds, in 3D give a real space feeling to this 5-skill level game. Long range scan shows you where the enemy are and you jump through space to the correct sector. Movement control is instant and keeping the enemy in your sights is a tough task helped by a joystick (Kempston). If you're successful at clearing the entire galaxy you can land on the aliens' planet to refuel before jumping the timegate to another infested galaxy. Full damage status readouts. Highly recommended.

3D COMBAT ZONE
Producer: Artic, 48K £5.95
According to Artic, this is their best-selling programme to date, and no wonder. The first real 3D effect in the Spectrum. Travel across the flat plain and battle with enemy tanks, flying saucers and super tanks — a kill or be killed battle of wits among the pyramids in real time. The game gives a tremendous sense of moving about in a space and can be quite hpynotic. Battle radar to spot the enemy and calculate distance. Joystick: Kempston. A first rate game and highly recommended.

3D SPACE WARS
Producer: Hewson Consultants, 16K £5.95 (1)
Introducing a new race of aliens — the Seiddab (baddies spelt backwards), this game is a straightforward zap em which does not boast the complexities of a Star Trek game, but is at least to the point. The minute it starts the baddy Seiddies are there, etched atainst a realistic moving star background. Below, your instrumetns are easy to read, bar codes for fuel and speed. Twin lasers fire from the visible nose cone of your craft and are a satisfying effect. Line up the cross hairs on the enemy and fire away! The Seiddab craft are well drawn and move neatly in 3 dimensions, firing back when they want. There are refuelling points in space which you must reach in time before your power runs out. Positive movement and smooth graphics, quite good sound, joystick: AGF, Protek and Kempston. Overall CRASH rating 68%, recommended as good value. M/C.

3D SPAWN OF EVIL
Producer: DK Tronics, 16K £4.95
It's a bit of a cheat—to keep the programme in 16K the very long-winded instructions are on one side of the cassette and the game on the other, which is irritating at first. The viewscreen works well with stars defining movement, but control is exceptionally sluggish and hitting the alien swarm is a bit like trying to kill ants with a pogo stick. In the end a slow and confusing game with no joystick option.

ZZOOM
Producer: Imagine, 48K £5.50
Among the most popular games of 83, Zzoom has you in a plane rescuing humanity. Viewscreen shows you a road over which you are flying with little humans on the horizon whom you must save from the enemy bombers. These come in waves from the left, some just content to wipe out humanity, others which turn and fire at you, wearing down your shield. If you survive two waves without getting destroyed or crashing into the ground, there's a desert infested with tanks, and the sea with submarines and ... Scrolling graphics for the titles all help to make this a very memorable game and excellent value for money. Joystick: Fuller & Kempston.

MAZE GAMES

Maze games come in all shapes and sizes (this section excludes Pacman style games however). Some of those included here might not even seem to fit the category, but on reflection you will see that in fact they are really maze games (at least, you might if you try hard).

ANDROIDS
Producer: Sunshine Books, 48K £5.95
Androids boasts a vast maze populated with homicidal robots and is Sunshine's version of 'Frenzy/Panic'. Armed with a laser (fires in the direction you're pointing) and five lives, you must find the hidden exit to the next level. Special panel's replenish your force field and laser power. It's a 'no win' game for points. The graphics are good, nice animation and machine code makes for high speed movement. Good value for money and very playable.

ANDROID 1
Producer: Vortex, 16K £4.95
What we have here is a well thought out and addictive rape of the robots 'Frenzy/Berserk' game with five skill levels and copious screens. Android 1 is a superior robot and he has to blast his way through the walls of the complex towards, what? (A reactor actually, but who cares, it's the getting there that's fun). His enemies are several types of unattractive mutants (attractive graphics) including Groupies (in groups), Wanderers (luny lonies), Skaters (slithering around and hard to hit) and Bouncers who land on your head when you're least expecting it. Joystick: Kempston. Recommended.

ANDROID 2
Producer: Vortex, 48K £5.95 (2)
Author: Costa Panayi
A sequal to the successful Android 1, this is a vastly improved game in both looks and playability and was one of issue 2's Games of the Month. Android 2 is a superior robot equipped with a head mounted laser. He must walk the maze of death, survive the paradoz zone and overcome the dangers of the flatlands. In so doing he must stop the advance of the Millitoids, long entipeded creatures. Other hazards include land mines (loads of them), Hoverdroids and indestructible Bouncers. The playing area is vast, the maze alone is bigger than in most other comparable games, and everything is seen in a solid 3D perspective from above. Every detail of this game has been polished — the graphics are excellent, colourful and well animated, the sound is also good, it has beautiful instructions, is difficult to play and addictive. Good control keys, joystick: Kempston. Excellent value for money and highly recommended. Overall CRASH rating 90% M/C.

BEDLAM
Producer: MC Lothlorien, 16K £5.95 (1)
A very fast shoot em up game in which the maze is not a central problem, but the infestation of beautifully animated creatures are. It's supposed to be an asylum planet and you're the only sane inmate (so you think)! Equipped with your twin-firing photon bolt, it's quite a task to keep the ravening monsters at bay. They move faster and faster as they dash at you and there are also 'saucerous guards' nipping about, firing at your. The one drawback, perhaps, is that the creatures take a very predictable path towards you, but it's still all extemely fast. Could have had more variation to heighten addictivity. User-defined control



keys, so AGF or Protek joysticks are usable, pretty good value for money and an overall CRASH rating of 78% M/C.

BRAIN DAMAGE
Producer: Silversoft, 16K £5.95 (1)
I Morrison & D Anderson
You're in charge of a tank deep inside a bored and dangerous computer which sees your presence as a bit of fun to enliven its dreary life of computing. Hot on your tail are Electron Panzers, Marauders, Centurions and Rogue Programs, each smarter than the last. The object, quite simply, is to hit one of these and promote to the next level. But it isn't as easy as it sounds. It's a measure of how fast the game can be that even with only one hit to concentrate on it remains a very difficult zap game to play. Only one blast at a time but the laser beam ricochets (beautifully). A complex array of control keys allow for 4-directional movement and turret rotation. Neat, smooth graphics, good sound, joystick: Kempston, AGF or Protek. 3 control key options, 3 skill levels, multiple screens, pretty addictive one you get the hang. Overall CRASH rating 69% M/C.

BUBBLE TROUBLE
Producer: Arcade, 48K £5.50 (2)
Author: Bruce Rutherford
The mazes are quite simple but there are 50 of them. You must guide your burglar around each maze stealing the odd valuables dotted around, whilst avoiding the lovable attentions of giant bubbles which follow close on your heels. You may select any maze to commence the game, no one is really any harder than another but there are 3 skill levels which increase the number of bubbles, but also slow down the game. The hero, Basil, is a hat on legs and nicely animated and the maze graphics are varied and imaginative, but there was a feeling that the game lacked the vital quality that made it addictive. Rated above average. Overall CRASH rating 63% — cursor keys, joystick: AGF, Protek or Kempston, M/C.

CORRIDORS OF GENON
Producer: New Generation, 48K £5.95 (1)
A 3D Maze game which demands 'Master Code' skills and numeric sequence recognition from the player. Deceptive in that it seems very ordinary at first but rapidly becomes unstoppable. Basically you must thread your way through the concentric ciruclar maze to find the central control room for the evil computer of Genon and destroy it. Doors cut the corridors into segments and connect between adjacent corridors. These are opened and shut by the computer and you can open them by punching in the correct code (each set of doors has its own numeric sequence). With your ESP at high level the screen displays the next door's code, but there's a nasty monster called Bogul chasing you. Each time he bogulises you, your ESP goes down and more doors have blanks which you must work out before the door opens or shuts for you. The ingenious touch lies in the excellent sound track of Bogul's thudding footsteps as he chases up behind you — turn around and you'll see him. Neat,solid graphics and unusually playable. Cursor keys for movement in conjunction with 9 keys (used with an overlay) for code breaking. Joystick: Kempston, AGF or Protek. Overall CRASH rating 72%, excellent value for money if you enjoy a bit of figuring, M/C.

CRAZY BALLOONS
Producer: A&F, 16K £5.75
A simple maze made up from crosses is only just big enough to let your waggling balloon through in places. Elsewhere you must use precision and timing to squeeze through without touching the sides. Extra points for using the narrowest passages. Perhaps too simplistic for most, but still not as easy as it first looks. There is a time limit.

CYBERTANKS
Producer: Star Dreams, 16K £5.95 (1)
Here the maze actually represents the streets and buildings of a city. You're in command of a tank, surrounded by the cybertanks which you must shoot out of existence before they get you. You can blast your way through the maze walls to get at your enemy. If you clear the first screen the second sheet has mines littered around which destroy anything that touches them. All in all it becomes very repetitive and our reviewers thought it reasonable but only average fun to play. The graphics are quite small, although nicely designed and move smoothly enough — the title card is brilliant. Two sets of control keys, well placed, joystick: Kemston. Overall CRASH rating 58% M/C.

DO DO
Producer: Blaby, 48K £5.50
Not at first sight a maze game, but this is one where you make your own maze for protection from the dreaded Snow Bees which infest the Arctic ice wastes where you, the last living Do Do, find yourself stranded (beat that for a scenario!) The first Spectrum version of 'Pengy' it has charming graphics and good sound. Basically you must shunt the ice blocks around to escape the bees or crush them. If you're clever you can electrocute them against the walls. Joystick: Kempston. Recommended.

EMBASSY ASSAULT
Producer: ICL/Sinclair, 16K £4.95
As the nation's top secret agent your mission is to acquire top secret codes from the code room of a foreign embassy. Actually all you have to do in this dreary game is wend your way through a 3D maze, up and down stairs and find the room, then get out, all timed against the clock. No thrills no spills and very few frills. Each move means waiting interminably for the corridors to slowly build up. Nine levels with the simplest taking seconds.

ESCAPE
Producer: New Generation, 16K £4.95
Perhaps the most beautiful looking game yet for the Spectrum. Escape pits you against a 3D maze seen from slightly above so the horizontal pathways are obscured by the hedges. Somewhere in there is the key to the exit. As you enter a monster shoots in and homes in on you inexorably. Get the key and he speeds up. Get out and you're back with a maze and two monsters. Five levels and a 'no win' situation. It's depressing! One of the most panicky games we've seen. Joystick: Kempsoft II. Recommended.



ESCAPE-MCP

Producer: Rabbit, 16K £5.99

The Z80 processor bites back. Yes your Spectrum has gone berserk and you have been de-atomised. You must escape through nine levels while the MCP homes in on you and tries to destroy you. Escape-MCP features a series of simple but (as becomes clear when you play) fiendishly laid out mazes, representing the logic paths of the processor. You start top left and must first reach a key and then an exit to the next level. Slowly and inexorably the MCP sight homes in on you and the trick is to move along the paths in such a way that you leave yourself enough time to make the key and exit. Not at all easy. Cursor keys and user-defined, so almost any joystick can be used. An addictively infuriating game and excellent value.

ETX

Producer: Abbex, 16/48K £5.95

In 48K ETX speaks, though mostly what he says after the locquacious intro is 'Ouch!' ET is stranded on Earth searching for odd bits with which to construct a phonehome. The bits are hidden in numerous wells. He's pursued by a mad professor and a nasty from M15 (or 6 or something). Only 'young' Ernie is nice. The game is charming to look at but a little puzzling to play since it seems impossible to excape the wretched professor. Program contained on both sides of the cassette. Joystick: Kempston.

FREEZ'BEES

Producer: Silversoft, 48K £5.95 (2)

This is another version of 'Pengy', the object of which is to walk your penguin round the ice flows avoiding the nasty Snow Bees. You can burn away the square ice blocks or send them vlying in the hope of crushing a snow bee to death. This version features illumination of ice blocks from which snow bees will hatch for a flash (which givers you the chance to destroy a snow bee before it gets dangerous), and the fence which may be electrified when the penguin touches it, stunning any snow bee in contact with it. The graphics are nice, quite large, responsive and fast, but not over-colourful, and the sound is good too. The main drawback is that the game is very hard to play well and the snow bees are difficult to shake off, a fact which lowers th game's playability quickly. Good control keys, joystick: Kempston. 10 skill levels (speeds), reasonable value. Overall CRASH rating 61% M/C.

FRENZY

Producer: Quicksilva, 16K £4.95

Almost every software house has its version of the arcade favourite, 'Berserk', which pits you against evil robots in a complex of simp'e mazes, representing the different rooms of some alien HQ. Life in these places must be hell because all the walls are electrified, killing you and the poor old robots. Quicksilva's version is very good of its type, with simple but smooth graphics. You lose a life if you collide with wall, robot or exploding missile. Avoiding the missiles can be done by leaping through an exit into another room, but as you do hordes more robots appear. The keyboard positions are rather odd, direction and fire being controlled by keys 6-0 which makes it difficult to use a joystick. Moderately addictive but not bad for the price.

LAST SUNSET FOR LATTICA

Producer: Arcade, 48K £5.50

Arcade seem to specialise in obscure titles. Lattica is a complex maze with over 100 locations and three levels populated witn androids. The walls are electrified so you must avoid them or lose one of your four lives. The aim is to discover the location of a bomb which will destroy the entire planet when it explodes, and defuse it, murdering the androids on your way. The graphics are very good and richly coloured (you're a sort of 'Horace'-like creature). Joystick: Kempston/AGF or Protek and cursor keys. Eight directional movement. Good value.

LORD HARRY & LADY HARRIET

Producer: Lotus-Soft, 16K £5.50 (1)
Author: Derek Jones

The title indicates that if you want a lady hero you can load side 2 instead of side 1 for Lord Harry. The inebriated Lord is lost in his friend's ornate garden the morning after the night before. He must wander round, eating mushrooms to keep alive, whilst trying to find the secret exit. There are four interlinked gardens all full of puddles and trees in addition to mushrooms. The trees bar his way, the puddles lose a life — and to make matters worse there are two guard dogs chasing around after him. In one of the gardens there is a poisonous mushroom which, if Lord Harry eats it, is the end of him unless he finds the exit within 99 seconds. Reasonably well laid out control keys, progressive levels, attractive use of colour, but perhaps more aimed at the younger player rather than the arcade freak. Joystick: Kempston/Datel, Sinclair 2, Protek and AGF. Good value for money, overall CRASH rating 63% M/C.

THE HOUSE OF THE LIVING DEAD

Producer: Phipps Associates, 48K £5.95 (2)

This verges on being a 'Pac Man' variant, but not quite. The idea is that you are spending the night in a strange house full of unpleasant monsters. Fortunately you are wise to the lore and know that if you can get the four sections of a cross from the four corners of the floor to the central room you will destroy the power of the monsters. Each screen is the same maze with a square in the middle and four 'L' shaped pieces which you must collect one at a time and take to the centre. When the cross is formed the monsters die and you progress to the next, more difficult level with more nasties. The game offers reasonable graphics and is simple to play. Not very addictive, not even very serious but it may appeal to younger players and is certainly fun between alien-zapping. Poor keys (cursors), joystick: Kempston, average, CRASH overal rating 59% M/C.

MAGIC MEANIES

Producer: CDS, 16K £5.95 (2)

Despite the inlay blurb of times past and wizardry renewed, this is no adventure game, in fact a good version of the 'Dig Dug' type of mining game, where your man creates his own tunnels in search of valuables and thus his own maze, and gets chased by meanies. You're in control of Meltec (a wizard) who is seeking lumps of lead. There is also a wandering cherry on each screen which he must collect to progress to the next screen. The meanies set off chasing him up his self-created pathways — to get rid of them he can undermine the red apples and drop them on the meanies, or at least block off a pathway before dashing onto the next blue lump of lead. The graphics are quite small, one character size and they move jerkily, but the game's attraction lies in the skill and quick thinking required to outwit the meanies. Sensible control keys, joystick: Kempston, 9 skill levels in speed and progressive difficulty, above average. Overall CRASH rating 58% M/C.

MAZE DEATH RACE

Producer: PSS, 48K £4.95

You're in your car, lost in this endless maze, avoiding the hazards like rock falls, ice, oil slicks and the maniacs in their evil cars. Collect the flags for points and watch out for fuel dumps — the thirsty car needs them frequently. Control is fast and positive, good graphics and scrolling from screen to screen is effective. A good, fast game. Unfortunately you can't alter between the three skill levels once selected, and the instructions don't tell you that it's the cursor keys which operate. No Joystick option but it will work with AGF or Protek. Machine code, moderately addictive.

MAZIACS

Producer: DK Tronics, 48K £5.95 (1)
Author: Don Priestley

This pure find-your-way-through-a-maze-and-escape game is among the best ever from DK. Simple in concept, its playability lies in the lovely graphics and its speed of play. The aim is to enter the maze and discover the gold, which will be at least 200 moves away. Embedded in the walls are many useful items like food and swords. Keep your strength up by eating and use the swords against the dreaded Maziacs. There are prisoners also embedded in the maze walls and they will tell you the shortest route to the gold by marking the path in yellow. This only lasts for a few seconds however. The swords only last for one attack, and without one an awful Maziac will surely kill you off. Once you've found the gold your problems really start as you can't carry both gold and a sword, so it makes sense to kill of as many Maziacs as you can on the way in. Excellent graphics and animation with plenty of detail. User-defined control keys, joystick: Kempston and cursor joysticks via user-define. 4 skill levels, randomly generated maze each game, CRASH rating: highly recommended, overall 82% M/C.

PLUGGIT

Producer: Blaby, 48K £5.50
Author: Rob Jones

The hero, Percy, is a little IC chip who has become unplugged from his socket. You must guide him through the maze of circuitry inside 'Uncle Clive's' computer and plug him in again. There are two keys to find which, when used in the correct door, will unlock them, but they must be done in the right order. The maze is full of resistors, diodes and capacitors which are chasing Percy, and his energy, which starts at 1200 units, runs down very quickly. To add to his problems, the walls of the maze are electrified. The only weapon is an energy beam which fires in the direction of movement. Only a small part of the total playing area is visible on screen. Good graphics and smooth compiled movement. Auto start and cursor contgrol keys are a slight drawback. CRASH rating: a worthy maze game if not quite up to Blaby's addictive standards. Overall 63% compiled M/C.

QUETZALCOATL

Producer: Virgin Games, 48K £5.95 (1)
Author: Gareth Briggs

Quetz is one of four Aztec Gods you'll meet in this 3D maze which represents the interior of an Aztec temple with four floors. Quetz is the nicest and provides glass beads for you to collect and gives you a map of the floors when you bump into him. The map disintegrates with use, so use it sparingly. The other gods all present different problems to overcome on their particular floors. The floors are connected by shafts, mostly black and a few blue ones. If you use a black shaft, it destroys the beads you have collected. The longer you take to find a blue shaft the more black ones will appear. Should you find the exit safely, then the beads you have found can be used to barter with the natives for your life. It is a playbale game, with quite good 3D graphics and 6 skill levels, but not much sense of real danger. Average, CRASH rating 56% M/C.

RAIDER OF THE CURSED MINE

Producer: Arcade, 48K £5.50

This is only a maze game in a very general sense. The game has 30 levels to play through. Each level shows a cross section through a mine with several floors visible and three lifts. Your miner (nice animation) must walk through the mine, using the lifts, and collect all the diamonds littered about whilst avoiding the spiders, ghost and boulder-throwing troll. When all the gems have been collected a lamp appears at bottom left which must be collected before progressing to the next level. Not a fast game, and at first it doesn't seem addictive either, but the ease with which you progress is matched by the ease with which you seem to lose lives. Getting to the 30th level rewards you with a picture of the surface. Nice graphics and sound, the clever player lines up all his lifts first.



ROBBER
Producer: Virgin Games, 48K £5.95 (1)
Author: Keith Mitchell
This is a 3-part game. In the first section you must cross a room to 2 cupboards and collect a doorkey and a stethoscope. A guard moves about with a torch and you are caught if you appear in his beam. There is also a safe key hidden in the room. Getting through this dumps you onto a collapsing bridge with spikes beneath. The third part is a maze where you must swim under water, avoiding fish and get out before your oxygen runs out, then cross an invisible maze avoiding man-eating birds, get through narrow passages avoiding the bouncing balls, and lastly a maze which disappears as soon as you've seen it. Sounds exciting but it isn't. This is a good sketch for a much better game. The inlay instructions are incorrect and the game has a tendency to freeze terminally at odd times. Primitive graphics and unresponsive control don't help. Poor. CRASH rating overall 48%. Compiled M/C.

ROBON
Producer: Softex, 16K £5.95
Author: Andrew Beale
This 'Frenzy/Berserk' game, unlike most of Softek's other programs, is not very good. At the slowest of the nine skill levels it's a bit boring, and at the fastest it's quite meaningless. The usual format is followed; electrified walls, robots, unkillable 'Raboks' which leave exploding mines behind. Four directional movement with unanimated characters. 100% machine code, three lives, hi-score, no joystick option. Oddly the control keys are cursor with nine to fire, so you could use AGF or Protek joysticks for the movement but not for firing.

ROBOTICS
Producer: Ocean, 16K £5.90
The name was changed from 'Frenzy' to avoid confusion with Quicksilva's game of the same name. As usual the walls are electrified. But the graphics are much better than anyone else's version, bigger and better animated. Only the robots' heads are vulnerable, and their floating leader is invulnerable. You can only escape him by jumping into another sector. The game speeds up as you clear sectors, and more robot patrols appear. Move and fire in eight directions. Joystick: Kempston. Good value.

ROBOT PANIC
Producer: Soft Mill, 16K
You're the robot sent into the space ship hold to kill off the escaped nasties. A time limit imposed by the cargo hold walls moving in to crush you does not give this game enough impetus to be exciting. The graphics are limited and not smooth and the nasties remain static. Five different sets of creature. Only one life makes it irritating as you must wade through the setting up each time. Low playability. Cursor keys, so you could use AGF or Protek joysticks.

SPLAT
Producer: Incentive, 48K £5.50 (1)
Author: Ian Andrew & Ian Morgan
Put simply, Splat is dangerously addictive! The hero, called Zippy, must move round a large maze, eating clumps of grass, invisible grass, and plums, whilst avoiding the spikes, water and the edges of the maze. This would be child's play if it weren't for the fact that the maze scolls all by itself, in any direction it fancies. If Zippy gets trapped between a wall of the maze and the wall surrounding the edge, then it's SPLAT! Escape is on level 7 but with each level cleared the next becomes more difficult and the maze scolls faster. Panic sets in at a moment's notice. When you get through a screen the computer yells out 'Yippee!' Simple, effective graphics, smooth movement, user-defined control keys, joystick: Kempston, AGF and Protek. Highly recommended, overall CRASH rating 82% M/C.

STYX
Producer: Bug-Byte, 16K £5.95
You must move your man through three horizontal areas; top, a simple maze infested with spiders to get to a door into the middle section, which is the river full of prahnas, and then to the beach, to pass through the lower area where the dead spirits lurk. If you make it through, the exit is guarded by a shrouded figure whose touch is death. It's a simple set up and would not be interesting if it weren't for the fact that it's not easy. The screens are always the same but with more denizens as you go along. Keyboard positions are good, the graphics neat eight directional movement. No joystick option.

TOBOR
Producer: Add-on, 48K £7.95
The title frame promises excitement, but the game doesn't deliver. Poor graphics and movement make you wonder why it needed 48K in the first place. Basically you must take on some robots in a simple outline maze. Keyboard positions are irritating and there's a poor response. No joystick option. Not really worth the very high price.



3D MONSTER CHASE
Producer: Romik, 16K £6.99
Author: Dave Noonan
This is a 3D 'corridor' type game. The maze is on three floors and your mission is to find the missing keys and return them to the start position. Then you must find a bomb and defuse it before it detonates (against the clock). To make the task harder there are monsters moving about the maze that can be killed by one of your limited supply of grenades. To help you the monsters can be seen on a radar screen. The 3D graphic representation is very good and easy to visualise. The keyboard positions are well thought out and a joystick may be used. The monsters appear very suddenly in front of you for a second before you lose your life — like a scene from Alien! Five skill levels and an absorbing game. Good value for money.

3D MAZE OF GOLD
Producer: Gilsoft, 16K £5.95
Author: T Gilberts
This is a maze without monsters or robots. The maze is seen from eye level in 3D blocks, so it's a game of orientation and geography. The aim is to wander the maze, collecting gold bars which lie on the floor and get to the level's exit quickly before the value of gold you are carrying falls to zero! This is no easy task, a pencil and pad would help. There are ten levels of play from 0 (impossible) down to 9 (village idiots). For levels 4-9 you can select an overhead plan view whenever you want which shows you your position and heading, the exit and positions of all gold bars left to collect. It doesn't show you the walls of the maze — that would be too easy. When you return to the maze itself a display tells you the value of the gold you have collected (falling all the while of course), moves made so far, level of play and a compass with a moving north. For the contemplative, an excellent game with loads of playabilty. Cursor keys, joystick: AGF or Protek.

TUTANKHAMUN
Producer: Micromania, 48K £5.95 (1)
Author: Dominic Wood
Tut was an Egyptian despot who stored his worldly goods in a large tomb. Your job as archaeologist or grave robber, is to wander the five tombs and collect as much treasure as you can. You may start at tomb 1 or at a later stage if you wish. The maze scrolls left and right and vertical tunnels wrap around top to bottom. What makes this game difficult is the ferocious speed of the beasts that inhabit the tombs. Monsters include mummies, cobras, spiders and skulls. You are provided with a continuous firing laser, but it only works horizontally, which makes you vulnerable in the vertical tunnels. There is also a smart bomb to be used once per tomb or life, but its effects are very short-lived indeed. At the top is a map of the entire complex. Doors block the tombs from each other. Lively graphics, speed and good key positions all combine to make this very playable and addictive. Overall CRASH rating 72% M/C — a maze/zap game with a different feel.

VOLCANIC PLANET
Producer: Thorn EMI, 16K £6.95 (1)
Author: Nick Burroughs
It is your task to destroy the evil race of Zerans, who live on a volcanic planet. To do this you must make your way through an underground complex to the depths of the city and place a bomb on the volcanic plug and then make your escape before it goes off. 5 skill levels provide a city with between 3 and 15 floors. The screen only shows a tiny part of the whole with a small map of the entire floor you are on. Floors are connected by lifts which only travel between 2 floors. The Zerans are equipped iwth blasters and huge crushing slaves. Dotted about are tool repair kits and spare oxygen bottles, but the Zerans will take them first if you're not quick. Your armour and life support is eroded by Zeran attack. The graphics are very good, especially the wonderful blaster effect, and all in all this is an excellent maze game with plenty of potential. Lots of control keys, joystick Sinclair and Kempston. One drawback — poor sound. Apart from that, a very good game, overall CRASH rating 69% M/C.

THE WARLOCK OF FIRETOP MOUNTAIN
Producer: Puffin Books, 48K £6.95 (1)
Author: N Mottershead & S Brattel
Put together by Crystal for Puffin, this is a simpler and more playable version of Hall of the Things, and adapted from a successful book. You must enter the labyrinth beneath the crags of Firetop Mountain to get the Warlock's treasure. This is guarded by Orcs, Spiders, Slime Mould and other horrors. Your weapons are a sword and a bow. To get to the treasure you must collect 15 keys. Most doors open and shut at command and the maze scrolls smoothly as you move. As in HOTT there are a lot of control keys — 18 in all, and practice is essential to stay alive. Good looking monsters, which home in on you as soon as they spot you, loads of speed in the fights, and for the price you get a copy of the book as well. Puffin have a winner with this one. Overall CRASH rating 73% M/C.

THE WIZARD'S WARRIORS
Producer: Abersoft, 48K £4.95
This is a robot/maze game, but a considerable improvement on the 'Berserk' type. The complex is haunted by robots which fire away blindly at anything, and which you must destroy. The earlier ones are prety dumb, but later additions get harder to hit and are better at hitting you; some are even invisible (use the radar to spot them). Machine code. Joystick: Kempston. Addictive and good value.

GHOST GOBBLING

Since its introduction Pacman has probably been the most enduring of the arcade games. For Spectrum software companies it has also been the most imitated, with just about every producer having a go. As a result there are numerous versions available with very little to distinguish one from the other. Some of them will be the subject of a CRASH Comparison in the near future. Meanwhile we list them here very briefly, only making points where there is any point (if you see what I mean). For anyone who has never seen a pacman type game (can there be anyone?) you are presented with a simple maze, often connected left to right by a wrap-around tunnel, the passageways of which are littered with regular dots. Your gobbler must wend his way round eating up every dot like a good boy before he can progress to the next level of difficulty. To make life hell there are several ghosts which zoom around trying to gobble your gobbler. Four power pills per level may be eaten which then allow you to gobble ghosts for a short while. It's all terribly enthralling and a joystick can be useful.

GHOST HUNT
Producer: PSS, 16K £4.95
Good, classic version with three skill levels and clear graphics. A pity, though, that the makers don't tell you which keys to use either on the inlay or the screen. In fact they are the cursor keys — not the best arrangement for fingers but useful because you can use a Protek or AGF joystick.

GHOST'S REVENGE
Producer: Micromania, 16K £5.95
Unfairly written off by a review in a well known magazine, this program rates as one of the most flexible and playable of its kind. Large, bright graphics with the usual features and a smooth action. Only four ghosts, but at the higher skill levels they are frighteningly intelligent at getting you. 10 skill levels, tunnel, and an unusual feature in the invisble maze mode, which starts off easily enough with all the dots outlining the paths, but becomes difficult as you eat the dots. Good sound too, and all round good value. Overall CRASH rating 72%. 100% M/C.

GNASHER
Producer: Mikrogen, 16K £4.95
Made with Mikrogen's usual bright colours and clear graphics. Classic copy.



GNASHER
Producer: R & R, 16K £4.95
Author: Jonathan Nixon
The maze in R & R's version is simpler than many but the reward is exceptionally clear and detailed graphics with very smooth movement. Various fruit appear to be eaten for extra points and this version doesn't suffer with virtually invisible edible ghosts. Power pills, tunnel and increasingly fast screens. Very positive keyboard action, joystick option: Kempston but most importantly user-defined keys if you don't like the cursors. One of the best gobblers around.

GOBBLE A GHOST
Producer: CDS, 16K £5.95
All the usual features with machine code smooth graphics. No joystick option.

GOBBLEMAN
Producer: Artic, 16K £4.95
Another standard version, pity though that Artic couldn't have made the ghosts a little slower after eating a power pill since it makes them impossible to catch.

GULPMAN
Producer: Campbell Systems, 16K £4.95
This is slightly different in that there's only one ghost to chase you but the more dots you eat, the faster he gets. Five screens, nine speeds, no pills or tunnels, but pretty addictive.

HAUNTED HEDGES
Producer: Micromega, 16K £6.95
Author: Derek Brewster
Derek Brewster is Neptune Computing, but this 3D pacman is marketed by Micromega. The price probably reflects the fact the 3D in a title or game sells better than mere two dimensions. In effect, though, this is very much the ordinary ghost game with a running figure instead of the usual toothy orange.

HUNGRY HORACE
Producer: Psion, 16K £5.95
Many critics regard this as the definitive pacman game for the Spectrum, and of course Horace has begat a number of sequels in other categories. Highly attractive graphics and smoothly animated make it a joy to play. There are several mazes of increasing complexity to get through. No power pills — just wits. Highly recommended.

MAZECHASE
Producer: Hewson, 16K £4.95
Considering the quality of most Hewson programmes, this one is a complete mystery. Put it down to history. It's probably the simplest one available, with matchstick figures, white ghosts and some fruit as power pills. Four screens, cursor keys so works with AGF or Protec joysticks. Not very good.

MAZEMAN
Producer: Abersoft, 16K £4.95
Abersoft's maze is a bit more complex than most and the graphics are clear and bright.

MONSTER MUNCHER
Producer: Ocean, 16K £5.90
Ocean's graphics are always pleasing, and this version works as well as any other.

MUNCHER
Producer: Silversoft, 16K £5.95
A good classic version, but the inlay card is all over the place telling us N = down, when it's M, and 5 starts a new game when it's S. In fact the keys used are quite sensible. No joystick option.

ROBOT RIOT
Producer: Silversoft, 48K £5.95 (2)
Author: Patrick Richmond
In a sense this is the opposite of a 'Pac Man' game in as much as you are laying dots in the maze instead of gobbling them up. The story is that the robots have run amok in the corridors of the Acme Robot Manufacturing Co, and you must guide the robot bomber through the maze, laying mines. The amokful robots materialise in the four corners, becoming more numerous the longer you take to accomplish your mission—they must be avoided at all costs of course. Your power supply drains rapidly, but there are power mites also materialising which replenish your supply if they are run over. The object is to lay mines in every corridor and entice the king robot out of the central control room so you can get in. An additional problem is that some corridors are equipped with sliding doors which keep shutting. The game has attractive graphics and manages to be surprisingly addictive in play. It's given an old format a new lease of life. Good control keys, joystick: Kemston, above average, overall CRASH rating 70% m/c.

PLATFORM GAMES

'Oh no, it wasn't the aeroplanes – it was Beauty killed the Beast,' says the man at the end of the film King Kong. As television is said to have killed off the cinema, arcade games are said to be killing off television, but good ideas cross all the barriers, so it's no surprise to see the famous Ape still going strong in the arcades.

Kong games are perhaps the best known of the platform games, but there are quite a few other types, all characterised by the need to climb ever higher either by jumping or climbing ladders and usually both. As with most arcade games joysticks are usually a help to higher scores.

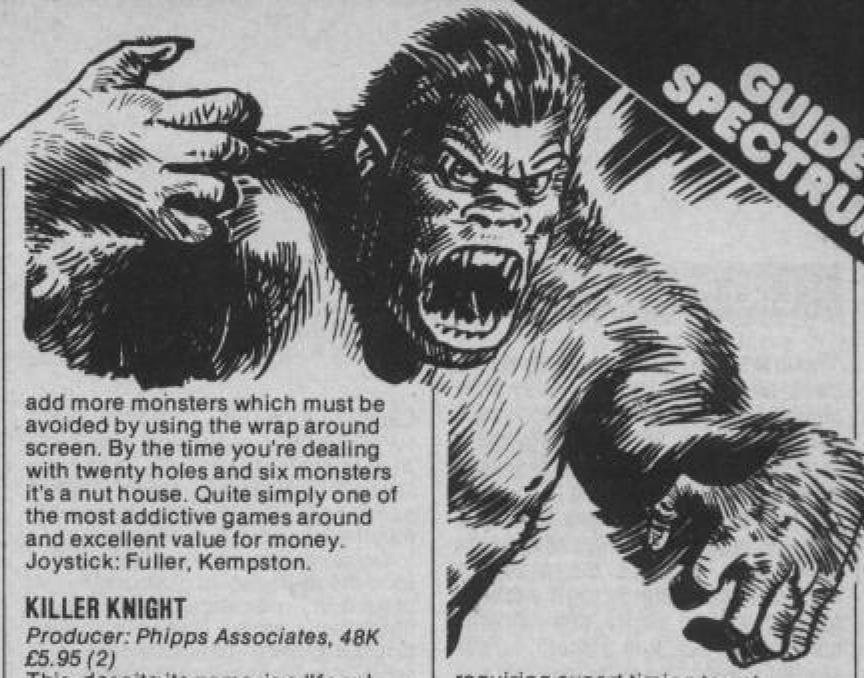
BARMY BURGERS
Producer: Blaby, 48K £5.50
Author: G Capewell
Sound and graphics are strong points of Blaby games and this maddening sesame seed bun of a game is no exception from its delightful titlecard onwards. You're presented with four platforms with the various elements of three hamburgers suspended from them. The task is to walk your chef over the ingredients which drops them level by level until they make up complete burgers; burger, cheese, lettuce and top half of the bun in that order. This would all be very simple were it not for the fried egg and two sausages which dog your footsteps. A blast of pepper will hold them up but there are only five blasts per life. The chef can move up and down the platforms using the ladders, but so can the pursuers. Each screen provides you with more eggs and sausages to chase. Three lives with points scored by releasing segments of the ingredients or squashing eggs and sausages between the falling burger bits. Addictive. Joystick: AGF or Protek and Kempston. Recommended.

BONKERS
Producer: Procom, 16K £5.50 (1)
Author: David James
A bunch of five earthlings are trapped on a space station by loads of aliens. You must get them safely down through the floors to five airlocks at the bottom. At first you have only one monster to contend with, but as you go along, more and more appear. Each floor has a moving 'lift' through which you descend. The animation and detail are very good and the game gets extremely difficult. Our reviewers thought this was a winner. Cursor keys or E,S,D,X (which is a silly arrangement). Joystick: Kempston, Fuller, AGF & Protek. 5 lives, well over 10 screens, good sound. CRASH rating: 78% M/C.

BUGABOO (THE FLEA)
Producer: Quicksilva, 48K £6.95 (1)
Author: Indescomp
One of the most colourful and maddeningly addictive games of the pre-Christmas period, 'Bugaboo' boasts feature film titles and an engaging hero in the flea. Bugaboo has fallen into a deep gorge and must hop his way out, by leaping from ledge to ledge. The strength of leap is determined by releasing the key when the bar indicator at the bottom of the screen reaches the desired level. As it moves extremely fast, this is not an easy task. The gorge is swamped with vegetation which gets in the way, and there's an appalling yellow dragon which pops up and eats Bugaboo. 2 keys control left/right hops and the cursors scroll the screen. Excellent, colourful graphics with very smooth movement, good sound and highly recommended. No joystick option. CRASH rating: addictive qualities 90%, overall 91% M/C.

CHUCKIE EGG
Producer: A+F, 48K £7.90 (2)
Author: N Alderton
Some games seem on the surface to be no different to other games of the same type, and yet manage in some hard to define way to be great. Chuckie Egg is one. In most respects, very similar to 'Donkey Kong', you must guide your egg collector over many varied levels of platform, taking the eggs and avoiding the vengeful hens. Ladders connect the various levels and there are also lifts to negotiate. An element of strategy creeps in as you progress through the screens, as you find the best way round the screen to get at the eggs, often in very awkward places. The graphics are very good, smooth and responsive—some of the best jumping in any game. It gets to be addictive and frustrating. Excellent user-definable keys, works with most joysticks, good sound and progressive skill levels. The only drawback is the rather high price, but this game shouldn't disappoint. Features speech withthe Fuller Box and games for between 1 and 4 players. Overall CRASH rating 80% m/c.

DIGGER DAN
Producer: Ocean, 16K £5.90
Digger Dan is armed only with a spade. He must dig holes in the four levels of platforms, using the ladders to get up and down. Four monsters chase him around, hopefully upending in the holes, which he promptly fills in to kill them. There are safe spots at the end of each platform but he can't linger because the oxygen's running out. An oxygen bottle appears from time to time but getting at it can be difficult. If the screen is cleared it returns with fresh and slightly more clever beasts. Only



one screen and speed, but the graphics are smooth and nicely animated. Dan can jump down through the holes too, useful in a tight spot. The control key positions are sensible, but with six of them, a bit of a handful. Reasonable value for money.

GODZILLA & THE MARTIANS
Producer: Temptation, 16K £5.95
Author: Neil Streeter
Despite the title this is a Kong game — the only one in 16K for the Spectrum, but sadly it shows. The animation is very poor and limited,the characters are small and the movemnt is jerky and ill-defined. There is a falling oxygen level for a time limit, but it appears to reach zero and stay there without ending the game. Control keys are badly placed with 1/zero for jump left/right, 5/8 walk left/right and 7 for up. Another irritation is that there is only one life and one skill level. Joystick: none. CRASH rating: 35%

GOTCHA!
Producer: Blaby, 48K £5.50 (1)
You're Ernie, an old lag just broken out of prison. In the first screen you must escape from the prison compound, avoiding the guards and their torches, get through the opening and closing gates and into a life of crime in the second screen. This is a nightmare of platforms, littered with Hitachi stereos and other valuable goodies to be collected, but the screen is dissected vertically by 6 gates which ride up and down the screen, all out of time with each other. Once committed, Ernie cannot stop until he gets to the other side and climbs up a level. There's also a mean copper on the loose who, if he catches Ernie, sends him to the bottom of the screen after beating him up! Timing is the essence in this very difficult and attractive looking game. Not one for beginners! Sensible control keys, joystick: Kempston, reasonably smooth compiled machine code. CRASH rating: overall 77% recommended.

HOME RUNNER
Producer: Britannia, 48K £5.95
This is a lively game with attractive graphics and is really a variation on the Jumping Jack theme. Here the platforms are more solid looking and the holes open and close at random. Unlike Jumping Jack you can use the hold key to make your man hover over the holes. The various monsters jump down through the holes which makes timing an important feature of the game. On level three the Green Grinner appears, bouncing up and down, happily oblivious of the platforms or holes. Britannia is a relatively new company, so it's nice to be able to say that both their games (Stopming Stan in this section is the other) are very playable and good value.

JUMPING JACK
Producer: Imagine, 16K £5.50
Author: Albert Ball
At first sight the extremely simple graphics might be a disappointment —but this is a classic game. Jack's stick figure is beautifully animated. The platforms are merely thin black lines. At first there are only two holes, one moving down level by level, and one moving up similarly. Each successful jump creates another hole, so it gets frustratingly difficult to progress. Should Jack fall down a hole he lies stunned, if he falls through two he's out for even longer. If he falls all the way to the bottom he loses a life. Getting right to the top results in a line from a poem — you have to collect the rest of the lines, but the poem isn't the real reward in this game — it's playing the game. Subsequent levels add more monsters which must be avoided by using the wrap around screen. By the time you're dealing with twenty holes and six monsters it's a nut house. Quite simply one of the most addictive games around and excellent value for money. Joystick: Fuller, Kempston.

KILLER KNIGHT
Producer: Phipps Associates, 48K £5.95 (2)
This, despite its name, is a 'Kong' game. Only here it is an evil black knight who has kidnapped your girlfriend. In all respects it plays like a 'Kong' game with barrels to jump, holes to jump, ladders to climb and so on. There is an umbrella to be used once per life or screen to help brake a fall through a hole. The jumping action is highly finicky and difficult to time and unfair where there are three barrels in a row to be jumped. Graphics are small although bright and clean looking, but not much use of colour. An above average, difficult game, but in the end not very playable for long. 3 screens, 4 lives, 1 skill level. Overall CRASH rating 64% m/c.

KILLER KONG
Producer: Blaby, 48K £5.50
This is a very fine version with excellent graphics and plenty of screen variation. The detail is first class as well with neat animation. Mario's girlfriend shouting for help but rewarding the succesful climb with big kisses. Features lifts, trampolines, long narrow passages requiring expert timing to get through, a fairly butch looking Kong and probably the best sound on any program available. Joystick: Kempston or AGF & Protek. Recommended.

KONG
Producer: Ocean, 48K £5.90
Author: Paul Owens
Ocean's Kong is a pleasing version too, with chunky graphics starting with Kong stomping up the screen and thumping the girders into position. The animation is good with fast and positive movement. Here, the objects tend to come tumbling down the ladders, whereas in the Blaby version the platforms are more broken up and barrels etc drop off the ends of the platforms. So it's a little unfair to make lining up the man on the ladders such a critical business. Features a hammer which can knock out a few barrels. Keyboard positions are okay. Joystick: Kempston. Generally good value, but did we detect a tendency for the barrels to anticipate death? Five screens.

CREEPIE-CRAWLIES

There are two types of game which come under this heading, both very similar in appearance. The first is the sort where you are pitted against a centipede creature which descends from the top of the screen by moving left and right, line by line through a forest of mushrooms – the other is the sort where you are the centipede creature, travelling through a fenced garden, eating snails and whatnot else, whilst avoiding flowers, fences etc. Both types tend to be very fast and scores are improved with a joystick. Most versions are very similar – so it's a question of personal choice ...

BOZY BOA
Producer: CDS, 16K £5.95
Author:
Guide Bozy round the garden, eating snails, beetles and ladybirds, at the same time avoiding the fence, flowers and your own lengthening body. Each time you eat a beetle another segment is added to you and another flower appears. Eat all ten beetles and you enter another garden with a higher fence at a higher speed. Five levels, the fastest being quite demented. Automatic joystick selection if connected — Kempston. A nice touch is the tune, 'In An English Country Garden,' set off by bright and reasonably smooth graphics. Probably a limited appeal overall.

CATERPILLA
Producer: Ocean, 16K £5.90
Like Quicksilva, Ocean are moving on to better games than the basic arcade copies, however, their standard creepie has all the usual features and plays perfectly well.

CATERPILLAR
Producer: CDS, 16K £5.95
CDS have produced a pretty classic version of the centipede game, with a fast moving caterpillar which reverses direction on contact with screen edge or mushroom, an irritating spider, an innovative mushroom-laying flea, and a poisonous scorpion which turns mushrooms red. If the caterpillar hits a red fungus, a segment drops off like a bomb. The man can move left/right and up/down (within four lines). Cursor keys so Protek, AGF joystick can be used. Lack of skill levels results in a limited playing appeal. Average value. Machine Code.

CENTIPEDE
Producer: DJ Tronics, 16K £4.95
This is another pretty standard version, complete with spider, but for its price it's probably better value than Caterpillar.

CENTROPODS
Producer: Rabbit, 16K £5.99
Author: J F Cain
With its simple but charming graphics and machine code speed, Rabbit's Centropods is probably the best of the lot. There's a spider, a flea and a bottom line snail to avoid. The control keys are the most sensible I've come across — 0 for left, P for right and O/P together for up. You sail sedately down automatically. A fires. Continuous sound effects add to the thrills. If you clear the screen the wretched creature gets longer and faster. No need for a joystick here, excellent value.

CREEPY CRAWLER
Producer: Mikrogen, 16K £5.95
Author: S Townsend
This is a very ordinary 'Centipede' game, surprising that anyone would be offering something like this today. Apart from the creepy itself (and the mushrooms of course) there is only a spider and a simple flea to worry about. The colours are bright and the graphics smooth, sound continuous and the game very fast to play. But poor control keys (3/4/8/9) and the fact that it's 12 months out of date are against it. Also the inlay states that there are user-definable keys — there aren't. Overall CRASH rating (for its speed mostly) 58%. Joystick option: Mikrogen.

CYBER RATS
Producer: Silversoft, 16K £5.95
Author: I Hayward
Despite its title this is a centipede game. Instead of one fragmenting creature, you are presented with individual rats which work their way down from the top of the screen and there are even faster purple ones. They hide behind clumps of grass, and once they reach the lower levels of the screen you are hard put to avoid them. Cursor keys for movement and limited upward motion, no instruction on inlay card for firing (it's 0), but Kempston, Protek or AGF joystick option. Because the game is simpler in layout than most centipede games, it is also much faster. One or two players. Average value for money.



GALACTIC WARRIORS
Producer: Abacus, 16K £5.95 (1)
Author: Michael Lee
Difficult to decide whether this should be under the Galaxian heading or the one we've put it under, but at the end of the day Galactic Warriors is more of a 'Centipede' game than a 'Galaxian'. Your mission is to save Earth by manning the last missile base. An alien mother ship (can be shot if you're quick) spews out a row of smaller attack craft which then descend the screen in zig zag lines just like a centipede. Aboutkyour head the sky is littered with small asteroids. When the train of alien craft hit one, they reverse direction, and the line is split into segments whenver you hit one of their number. The asteroids can be blasted out of the way by your laser — magenta ones take 2 shots, red ones only one. When hit, alien craft turn into magneta debris. As they traverse left and right, the aliens drop bombs on you in a continuous shower. Apart from dodging them, there is a force field which is effective against contact with aliens and missiles, but blows you up if you use your laser. Excellent 'attract mode', good keyboard positons, joystick: none. Overall CRASH rating 67% M/C.

GRIDRUNNER
Producer: Quicsilva, 16K £6.95 (1)
Author: Jeff Minter/Salamander
This is not a TRON syle grid game as the title suggests but actually a 'Centipede' with 'Grid' pretensions. Looking a bit like a series of blips on an oscilloscope the blue centipede dashes left and right down the screen following the red grid. To the left of the grid an alien ship fires objects into the grid which impede the centipede, causing it to reverse direction. At the base of the grid, another alien craft moves from left to right firing a laser blast upwards, causing the creature to split into the traditional segments if hit. You're just inside the grid, able to move along the base and upwards for a few lines. Your laser too destroys segments of the centipede, but watch our for the laser craft and the side ship, and avoid contact with the centipede. It's designed to be fast and addictive, but none of our reviewers found it very inspiring. I/P left/right and zero to fire. Joystick: AGF or Protek. Small graphics, average sound and an overall CRASH rating of only 47% M/C

MEGAPEDE
Producer: Softek, 16K £5.95
Author: Andrew Beole
Softek's version of the noble creepy-crawlie game is just about as good as any. Here the scorpion tends to drop fleas rather as though they were bombs, which makes an interesting variation. Machine Code, nice graphics, nine skill levels. Good.

MILLIMON
Producer: Artic, 16K £4.95
Author: D Campbell & G Porter
Millimon is a 'Centipede' game with the usual features, a descending centipede, darting spider and snails (snails?). Artic have chosen to place the status report down the left of the screen rather than at the top or bottom, which makes the playing area unusually square. The graphics are average, not at all smooth and the game is slow and pretty easy to play on the lower levels. 6/7/8/9 and zero make for poor control keys. 3 skill levels, 3 lives, 1 or 2 player games. No joystick option. There are better versions available. Overall CRASH rating 55% M/C

SLIPPERY SID
Producer: Silversoft, 16K £5.95
Author: S Godwin
Slippery Sid is a large snake in a garden whose task in life is to eat frogs. Every time he does so a poisonous toad appears which he can't eat until having consumed a magic mushroom. Death occurs instantly if he touches the brick walls or himself. Silversoft have given enough elements to this fast game to make it quite addictive. The keyboard positions, however, are a bit daft, but you can use a Kempston joystick. Five skill levels with an extra life for getting to the fourth garden. Sound could have been better, otherwise good value for money.

SNAKE
Producer: Artic, 16K £4.95
Author: P Baker
Snake is, of course, 'Snake', where you guide your pet reptile round the screen eating the files and avoiding the walls, poisonous mushrooms and his own tail. Every time he eats a fly his tail grows longer. The graphics are very lightweight with all the drawbakcs of BASIC. The sound is continuous although unimaginative, but the game does have a nice 'attract mode'. The control keys are another drawback — 6/7/8/9. Awkward to use. They seem as though intended for use with Sinclair Interface 2, but if so, it doesn't say so. May please younger kids but there are much better versions available. Overall CRASH rating 45%.

SPECTICEDE
Producer: R&R, 16K £5.50
A diet of scorpions, fleas, spiders and worms in addition to the ubiquitous centipede. Three skill levels and hi score. A well rounded version.

SPECTRAPEDE
Producer: Protek, 48K £5.95
Now everyone has had their fill of basic arcade copies, many companies are getting down to producing better games and Protek have become noted for their simulation games like Airliner, which I suspect makes them far happier. Their creepie version is pretty respectable, however. All the usual features like scorpions, worms, fleas and the inevitable multi-legged monster itself. Three skill levels and hi-score. Can, of course, be played with a Protek joystick (and therefore AGF as well).

FROGGERS

Having become fed up with decimating aliens, the arcade copiers turned to more domestic chores like squashing frogs under lorries. The game requires you to hop a frog across a busy highway, avoiding certain death under the wheels. Sit on a river bank avoiding the odd snake or two and take a chance of crossing the river on the back of turtles and logs, then leap to the safety of a frog home. No one's ever explained why frogs should drown in the river – still ... On the whole the game provides more interest, better graphics and a more addictivity than most arcade copies. Joysticks are more than useful. As with pacman games and centipede games there is usually very little between any version.

FROGGER
Producer: A&F, 48K £5.75
This company always produce charming graphics and their Frogger is no exception, as 48K would suggest. All the standard features.

FROGGER
Producer: Rabbit, 16K £5.99
Rabbit provide a four lane highway to cross, a barrier and a river full of logs and crocodiles. Here you may use the crocs for jumping on, but if you land too near the mouth you will lose a life. Three lives, but you must get five frogs safely across before moving to the next screen for faster traffic and more crocs. Cursor keys and user-defined, so you can get practically any joystick to work. Good value.

FROGRUN
Producer: Anirog, 16K £4.95
Machine code and attractive graphics and good sound. Features snakes on the bank, logs, turtles, crocodiles and lady frogs to rescue for extra points. At its price, pretty good value.

FROGGY
Producer: DJL, 16K £5.95
A highly rated version with very busy 3-lane highway, turtles that sink under your weight, crocodiles in the frog homes and five lives. There's a time limit too which can be very cruel. For exra points there's a stranded frogling to rescue. Four skill levels and seven speeds. Joystick: Kempston, or AGF and Protek on the cursor keys. Recommended.

JOGGER
Producer: Severn, 48K, £4.95
Unfortunately, none of our reviewers have seen this game yet, so we'll try and catch up with the joggers another time.

LEAPFROG
Producer: CDS, 16K £5.95
This is a standard version which offers the usual hazards but adds a snake on the bank if you linger too long, and dragonflies in the frog homes for extra points. Attractive graphics but it's a bore waiting for that damned tune between each game. Uses cursor keys, so Protek and AGF joystick interfaces may be used.

ROAD FROG
Producer: Ocean, 16K £5.90
Ocean's version doesn't have turtles (probably went on strike) but some of the logs sink, and there are snakes on the bank. Six frogs to get safely home for a second screen and the traffic moving faster. Unlike some versions you can only go forward. No joystick option.

ROAD TOAD
Producer: DK Tronics, 16K £4.95
Marketed by DK and made by Elfin, Road Toad is a frogger by any other name. The graphics are okay but the hazards aren't that keen, and the sound is poor. There are better and more addictive versions available.

YOMP
Producer: Virgin Games, 16K £5.95
Author: Terry Murray/Roy Poole
In the main, Virgin's first batch of games were pretty poor and madly overpriced (£7.95). Now they've brought the price down, but frankly this still isn't good value. You are supposed to 'yomp' your Paras over the highway and then get them through a minefield. There's no disguising the fact that this is a frogger game with 'mined-out' pretensions. The basic program makes controlling movement very difficult and the way the traffic moves along the highway makes it almost unplayable. Only one moment in the repeating cycle can get your men through safely. In the minefield movement sensors mean sudden death through mistakes, but I wonder how many people will even bother getting there? Four skill levels, no joystick option.

GRID RUNNERS

Ever since the Movie *TRON*, grid games have been popular, almost a cult because they exemplify the computer game – simplicity, high speed, action on a strict grid as defined by the computer.

BLIND ALLEY
Producer: Sunshine Books, 16K £4.95
Author: Simon Lane
Blind Alley is what passed for sport in the year 3017, you are told on the inlay. In fact the game looks confusing at first, but that's because it is fast and there's no time to think. This really is a game where those with quick and sure instincts win. You must steer your ship round the grid in such a way that you block off other ships, forcing them into a blind alley where they are forced against your trail, their own trails, or the edge of the screen. Of course it usually happens the other way round ... You start off against two ships, then four, then 6 and so on. It gets very hard! Workd with Kempston joystick. Avoid hitting reverse of the direction in which you're travelling — it's instant death. Recommended.

CRUISING ON BROADWAY
Producer: Sunshine Books, 16K £4.95
Author: Jeff Naylor
The graphics don't portray the famous streets around Times Square in New York as the title suggests, they could be any streets that the grid represents. You're in your car when a cop pulls in behind, you decide to make a getaway. If he catches you then the game starts from scratch. You score points by the length of line travelled before capture. Your only weapon is the facility to create a temporary block in the road and hold up the cop. Clear the frame and more chasers join in or you get a more complex grid to traverse. A simple, effective and highly addictive no win game. Joystick: Kempston (and Softlink II).

GRIDRUN
Producer: Arcade, 48K £5.50
Robot security picks up your trail just when you thought you had given them the slip (trust robots to be bloody minded). Now they're catching up with you — and no one's ever survived the grid before. Actually the grid resembles a pac man type maze in this fast game. You drive around the rectangular, concentric rings, switching lanes at the compass point junctions. Driving in the opposite direction is the robot security car. Never the twain should meet! You need good reactions, but it might have been a more skilful game if there were more crossover points. No joystick option.

GRIDRUNNER
Producer: Quicksilva, 16K £6.95 (1)
More of an electronic grid meets centipede than a true grid game. See main review section.

LIGHT CYCLE
Producer: PSS, 16K £5.95
Light Cycle is similar in concept to Blind Alley where you fight it out on the grid with an opponent. In this case only two trails however, either against the computer or a second player. The graphics are simpler but more effective, representing the laser light trails left behind your craft. Seven speed levels, no joystick option. A very fast game to play for hours.

SUPERSNAILS
Producer: Games Machine, 16K £5.95 (2)
Author: David Hay
There's a crazy story about a Doctor Winkelhoff who is keeping giant supersnails in his lab, which want to get out, and they leave superglue trails behind them, but what we have here is a TRON-style grid game. Therefore the graphics are extremely simple, although extremely fast. The idea is to trap your opponent against the wall, his trail or your trail. If you succeed a door in the wall opens up and lets you escape. The two features in this game which make it a worthwhile addition to the grid collection (of what are now rather old games in themselves) is that it allows the use of 8 directions instead of the usual 4, which opens the potential of the game up enormously; and the game allows 1 or 2 players to play against the computer as well as against each other. Sensible control keys, joystick: Kempston, 9 speeds, addictive. Overall CRASH rating 63% m/c.

TRANSVERSION *Producer: Ocean, 16K £5.90 (1)*
Author: C Urquhart & N Pierpoint
Undoubtedly Ocean's best and most addictive game to date. It combines simplicity of idea with speed and killer frustration. You are captain of the Elimax. Your task: to clear the galactic grid of alien spawn. There's no shooting since the Elimax simply destroys the spawn by moving over it. But there are 4 alien ships situated on each edge of the grid firing at you. Each one, operating and firing independently, moves along its edge, homing in on you, and aims its missiles along a line of the grid. You can be facing up to four missiles at one time and it's death to remain stationary, or operate on a single line, for more than a second. With each screen cleared you are faced with a different and more difficult arrangement of spawn to clear. There is also a 'between frame screen' of spiral shaped spawn for bonus points. Only one life so frustration levels can be dangerous. Excellent packaging, well used sound, very smooth graphics and good control keys. Joystick: Kempston, AGF and Protek. CRASH rating: Highly recommended, overall 83% M/C.

PAINTERS

Another of the earlier arcade type games which proved popular was Painter, and the idea has spawned many versions, several of which are available for the Spectrum. The principle behind a painter game is to make your character traverse a maze or grid, colouring the structure as he goes. Inevitably there is some nasty influence at work which tries to prevent this harmless activity ...

COLOUR CLASH
Producer: Romik, 16K £7.99
Author: I Morrison/D Anderson
Colour clash contains four phases in a paint-the-squares game which demands strategy as well as skill. In phase one you fill the numerous squares by 'painting' round them, and if you succeed, you have a chance to eat the pursuing paint pots pacman style. Phase two is a bonus points section where you must press the fire button at the right moment to guide it to the flashing arrow. Stage three is the same as stage one only you are forced to paint each square one at a time rather than dodging along any line. The fourth and most demanding, has you attempting to surround the paint pots. Three keyboard layouts, joystick: Kempston or Sinclair. Three skill levels, excellent graphics and good value for money.

HIGH RISE HARRY
Producer: Blaby, 48K £5.50
One of the most origiinal painter games. Harry must rustproof loads and loads of girders but he's being chased by the rustbugs. As in a Kong-type game, Harry's only way of avoiding the bugs is to jump over them, but he must paint every inch of the border before he can paint another on the same screen. Mean! Three screens including slides and lifts. Uses cursor keys, joystick: Kempston, AGF or Protek. Highly addictive and good value.

OH MUMMY
Producer: Gem Software, 16K £4.95 (1)
You are in charge of a party of archaeologists exploring Egyptian tombs. Each tomb has 5 levels, and on each you will find treasure houses, a scroll, a key, a mummy of the royal family, and two guardians. As soon as you enter a tomb, one of the guardians will be awakened and start chasing you. The other remains dormant unless you are unlucky enough to uncover it. You may only exit a tomb once the key has been uncovered, and you can kill off a guardian only after the scroll has been found. This may not sound like a 'painter' but in realtiy it is. The tomb is divided into squares with





pathways between them. As you zip along a trail of dots shows your route and when all four sides of a square have been uncovered the contents of the square are revealed. It seems quite easy at first but at higher speeds and skill levels it becomes more addictive as the guardians become more intelligent. Excellent user-defined keys, joystick: AGF or Protek via cursors, good colour and graphics, 15 skill/speed levels, overall CRASH rating 69% — more fun than addictive perhaps, M/C.

PAINTER
Producer: A&F, 48K £5.75
A classic version, simple, beautiful graphics, good sound and utterly addictive. You must aerosol the spaces between the paint pots and daffy paint rollers chase you round, chuckling gleefully when they catch you and roll you flat. You start off against one roller, then two, three and so on. While it's not difficult to begin with, it gets pretty fast when there are several rollers up against you. Good keyboard positions, no joystick option.

POTTY PAINTER
Producer: Rabbit, 48K £5.99 (2)
Author: J F Cain
This is a pretty classic version of 'Armidar' — a paint the squares game. The screen is divided into 24 rectangles of 3 different areas, each accorded a score of 100, 300 or 500 points. You must walk your monkey around the perimeter of the squares (a grid of dotted lines) until each square has been completed (the walked lines become solid). As each square is completed it is filled in with colour and you get the points. There is a bonus second screen — guide a teddy down various poles to land on a banana, then the third screen is similar to the first except you are a paint roller and there is a time limit which is eating the squares' points away. Of course all this is done to the tune of thudding chasers' footfalls, who are out to get you. It's a fair copy with reasonable graphics, although the game type doesn't lend itself to good looking screens really. Cursors or user-definable keys, joystick: AGF or Protek, poor sound, progressive difficulty, average but reasonably addictive. CRASH overall rating 60% m/c.

TRAXX (1)
Producer: Quicksilva, 48K £6.95 (1)
Author: Jeff Minter/Salamander
Producer by Salamander for Quicksilva, Traxx is basically a 'painter' game with an ingenious difference. You have a grid of boxes, 30 in all, and the base of the bottom centre box is already painted purple. You're a little green cursor, and as you move onto unpainted track it turns purple behind you. The object is to paint all the track, but the difference is that the paint is elastic — it won't stretch further than 3 sides of a box, so each box must be completed before moving onto the next. There's a chaser, of course, as many as 9 depending on the skill level, and 9 playing speeds. Sensible control keys, joystick: Protek or AGF. Mixed views with the main criticism being that it was difficult to control in a silly rather than exciting way, it being too easy to overshoot a turning. If you do so the elastic paint zips back and you have to start again. Fair value for money, CRASH rating 61% M/C.

TREKKIES

From the earlier days Star Trek has spawned a number of computer versions, all basically alike. They usually have several skill levels and work on option menus which allow you to use Warp Engines, Impulse Engines, Phasers, Photon Torpedoes; view the short or long range scan, galaxy map or the immediate sector. Status reports show weaponry left, power, damage etc. Some give you a battle plan view, others a cockpit view with a more arcade element as you aim your phasers at the darting enemy. The enemy is usually the Klingon Empire, though there may be some Romulans around. All the games have star bases for docking and repair. The higher the skill level the more enemy ships and bases there are, and the less Federation star bases. Among the better programs, it's very much a matter of personal choice. Here we list the features of each briefly.

STARFIRE
Producer: Virgin, 48K £5.95
Author: M C Davis
Virgin always have good, clear instructions, and this was one of the better first issue games. Features: Galactic war report, detailing mission, aliens left, starbases and stardates left: Computer call — main menu: Long range scan, well laid out with the eight adjacent sectors shown: Navigation, menu for moving from sector to sector: Battlestations, arcade style viewscreen with four-directional movement and fire at visible enemy. Docking with a starbase is tricky, and there are also time portals in space as well as asteroid storms to contend with. On balance a reasonable game with ten skill levels.

STARSHIP ENTERPRISE
Producer: Silversoft, 48K £5.95
This comes with a good instruction manual. Two players can always play a star trek game, one reading, the other punching buttons. The galaxy map shows the 64 quadrants (8 x 8), each quadrant is sub-divided into 64 sectors. Commands are: Navigate which provides 2 grids, one for navigating within the sectors of a quadrant, the other for moving to a new quadrant: Short range scan, shows the contents of the quadrant in which the Enterprise sits: long range scan shows the eight adjacent quadrants: Phasors, switches you to arcade style view screen with four-directional movement and fire at the visible aliens: Torpedoes, allows you to engage the enemy from a distance, avoiding their weapons: Damage report, speaks for itself: Shields, allows you to set the level of defence: Computer offers you the main menu and also controls the status report, galaxy map, damage repairs and auto docking. The action is fast and furious if you move into a sector or quadrant occupied by the enemy, and it's difficult to break into your command computer if it's fighting, so have everything ready before engaging the enemy. Good value for money. Kempston joystick option for arcade sequences.

STAR TREK
Producer: Neptune, 48K £5.50
Author: Derek Brewster This version offers good value for money since the tape also contains MUNCHMAN, which happens to be a very good pac man version indeed. Neptune's Star Trek offers all the options as listed in the above review, the major difference being that it has battle plan views rather than arcade style fights with the aliens. In using the weaponry, you must enter the direction of attack (0 degrees to 360 degrees), and its strength, then sit back with bated breath as the phaser or missile trail moves across the screen towards the enemy. Instant action is required on engaging the Klingon rotters as they fire the instant you are spotted. Excellent graphics make this an engaging version to play at speeds which certainly require more than one Captain Kirk per game.

ARCADE MISCELLANEOUS

AH DIDDUMS
Producer: Imagine, 16K £5.50
Author: D H Lawson
Don't be fooled by the title — this is no game for cissies! When it first appeared it had all the reviewers tied in confused knots. You are a teddy bear, shut in the toy box with the other toys for the night, but your baby's crying so you must get out and go and comfort him. The only way out is by using all the coloured building bricks and assembling them correctly, whilst avoiding all the nasty toys who want to stop you. When you escape the box you realise it is inside another, bigger box, and that one's inside another, and so on ... What confused everyone at the time was the method used to assemble the bricks, and Imagine's cassette inlay is of no help, nor are the game's instructions on screen: this is the outline idea — pick up the brick and take to top of screen slightly to right of correct colour block, then drop it. The brick should slide into place as if by magic. Considering the packed screen, the graphics are excellent. Confusion of keys, but this isn't an arcade speed game. Watch out for clockwork soldiers, play people and the aggressive train — and the baby's crying — there, there, there ...

ANGLER
Producer: Virgin Games, 48K £5.95
Author: Dirk Olivier
A quiet day on the river fishing sounds like a load of fun, but this game manages to be about as thrilling as a real day on the river fishing! Beneath your boat pass 18 layers of various fish. With each game you're given 100 casts of the line to hook as many as you can. Some fish are fine to catch, some can be quite dangerous, and caught crabs eat away your catch. There are five levels of play which determine how close to your hook a fish must be to get caught. The language is BASIC, so are the graphics and the idea. May be okay for very young children, but there's nothing here for the serious player. Makes you wonder why 48K of memory was required. Virtually nil addictiveness and an overall CRASH rating of 39%.

APPLE JAM
Producer: D K Tronics, 16K £5.59 (2)
Author: E Hickman
There's a lift to the left, a sauna to the right, an overhead jam dispenser and conveyor belt carrying apples in the middle. The idea is to centre your man to catch dripping jam and falling apples, leaping between each to prevent any falling into the rat run below. With every mouthful your man gets fatter and must eventually be taken to the sauna to sweat off his fat. The more food that falls through to the rats, the more adventurous they become, until they come up and try eating your man. Getting into the lift saves him, but it all becomes thoroughly silly and repetitive. Joystick: Protek, AGF, general rating: poor — 47%.

AQUAPLANE
Producer: Quicksilva, 48K £6.95
Author: John Hollis
It's a nice day and you fancy a spot of water skiing. After a moment you're suddenly surrounded by rocks, but they're fairly easy to get through. Following on though, the water's instantly full of row boats, and if you get through again the so-called G and T rich-kids arrive, incompetently flapping their yachts all over the place. Should you survive the hee-haws, there's the sharks ... Skiier and boat are seen in profile, controls (up/down/thrust) move both boat and skiier, but not

strictly in relation to each other, like the real thing, the skiier inconveniently follows a slightly different path to the boat. This makes it difficult to get both safely through the gaps. It's a very enjoyable game to play, but the lasting appeal is slight. A clever touch is that the border colours are split horizontally to match exactly the colour of sea and sky in the game, thus giving the impression that the entire tv screen is in use. Try it first and buy if you like it.

ATIC ATAC

Producer: Ultimate, 48K £5.50 (2)
In a castle of some 200 rooms, filled with useful and useless objects, you must guide your Serf, Knight or Wizard to find the three pieces of the front door key and escape. The rooms are full of all types of monsters which may be despatched by throwing weapons at them in fortunatley unlimited quantities. The rooms are seen in a sort of splayed perspective from above. Doors connect between rooms, stairs lead up or down, trapdoors do even more unpredictable things. The complexities of this game are likely to keep you going for ages. Not only must you employ adventure seeking skills to get through but also arcade skills to keep your charmed life from being eroded away by the nasties. There are quite a lot of keys to master, even if you use a Kempston, Protek or AGF joystick. The graphics are marvellous and if you aren't a nut already, then Atic Atac is likely to be the turning point. General rating: excellent, overall CRASH rating 92%.

BARRELDROP

Producer: Games Machine, 48K £5.95 (1)
Author: Russell Vincent
Starring Gordon and Flash, Barreldrop is a games compendium. Gordon suffers from blocked drainpipes—at least his house does. He cures this affliction by the curious method of rolling large barrels down the sloping roof and letting them fall through the blocked pipes. He only has five barrels and it's important they fall exactly down the centre of each pipe. If they don't he loses the barrel for good. Fortunately his faithful dog Flash is on hand sometimes and if called in time, the dog will recover the barrel and return it for another go. Clearing all five pipes successfully results in another screen which may be anything from a riddle to guess to an arcade shoot em up sequence. It's quite an original idea, in which nothing is too difficult, and yet there's so much that it becomes very difficult to get through. Playable and fun, good value, no joystick options. Overall CRASH rating 65% M/C.

THE BIRDS & THE BEES

Producer: Bug-Byte, 48K £5.95 (2)
Author: Adrian Sherwin & Matthew Smith
Boris Bee from Birkenhead has spotted a field full of flowers and has dragged his hive in there. Your job is to take him back and forth, collecting nectar from the flowers, whilst avoiding the somewhat annoyed birds. It takes several trips because the more flowers Boris visits, the heavier he gets. The more nectar he collects, the more the birds home in on him and the slower he flies. Eventually centipedes and honey bears appear. Controlling Boris isn't easy, he's something of a soggy flier and it takes practice to get used to him. The graphics are very good (Matthew Smith of Manic Miner) and the game is compatible with the Currah Microspeech. Good control keys, joystick: Kempston, Protek and AGF. Gets progressively harder, 5 lives, general rating: addictive and also recommended. CRASH Overall rating 83%.

CHOPPER RESCUE

Producer: Blaby, 48K £5.50
Author: G Capewell
The game starts with a helicopter dashing in to rescue the title from a dreadful spelling error, CHOPPER RISCUE it says, but the chopper comes back to insert an E and remove the I. As is their wont, scientists are being entombed by radioactive waste dropped from overflying planes. You must rescue them in your (nicely animated) helicopter by shooting away the waste and making tunnels in it to reach them. Each one must be returned to the safety of the helipad before getting the next. The gun fires in the direction of travel and there's not much time. If you get hit by the falling waste you're dead. This is a very fast game, almost impossible with the cursor keys, and difficult enough with a Kempston AGF or Protek joystick. Addictive and good value. Recommended.

COOKIE

Producer: Ultimate, 16K £5.50
Also available in ROM cartridge form at £14.95. Ultimate's graphics are famous. In Cookie you are Charlie the Chef, with mixing bowl below and dustbins to the side. On the right is the pantry containing the ingredients which must be got into the bowl. Unfortunately, the ingredients are pretty wild and they're accompanied by assorted objects that shouldn't be in the pantry and would upset the Ministry of Health officials if they knew about them. Using flour bombs to momentarily stun, you must knock the ingredients into the mixing bowl, and the rotters into the bin. Should you get it the wrong way round you lose points, time energy and everything. Each screen provides different and more difficult ingredients. Another game that needs a joystick, Kempston or Protek. Hi-score, one or two player games, 8-directional movement and the smoothest of graphics around. Addictive and highly recommended.

CYBERTANKS

Producer: Star Dreams, 16K £5.50
A complex maze of green blocks is the home of the enemy cybertanks. Take your tank round and shoot 'em up. You can blast away the blocks to get at them, but they are fast. Three lives, hall of fame, joystick: Kempston AGF or Protek. Nice graphics and playable, but perhaps not very addictive.

DODGE CITY

Producer: Phoenix, 48K £9.99 (2)
Author: Fraser Orr
This is a two-part game with an arcade cassette and an adventure cassette. Only if you complete 12 levels of the arcade game will you receive the secret code which allows you to run the adventure game. (See Adventure section next month for the game details of the second cassette). You are a mail rider on the desert plain, galloping your horse along, avoiding the cactus plants (a prickly end) and collecting the mail bags which have been so carelessly left about the desert. But behind you come baddies, shooting at your back. You can dodge the bullets or fire back. If you hit a baddie, he's

soon backed up by another. As each level progresses more baddies join in. Get shot, hit a cactus or miss 4 consecutive mail bags and you lose a life. Between each level you are given clues, vital to solving the adventure game. We had some doubts about the idea of combining two so inter-related games. Poor keyborad positons, joystick: Kempston, good colour and graphics, 12 skill levels essential (24 in all), above average. CRASH overall: 57%.

DOOMBUGS

Producer: Workforce, 16K £5.50 (1)
This is an original type of creepie crawlie game but it is not a 'centipede' game. There are basically two screens. In the first our hero, Tarant Tula, finds himself in the Grubbers' Lair. There's a trap-door leading to the next screen which only opens after repeated hammerings of Tarant Tula's head. There's also a pile of honey for the bugs to eat, but Tarant (to use his first name) must take a mouthful of the honey between each attempt on the door. The Grubbers, little round things, wander about and when they meet a green, squirmy Bubbergrubber is formed. These eat honey too, and should two of them meet a Red Backed Grubber results. These are the ones that kill off old Tarant if they catch him. Aim is to get through the trap door before any amount of Red Backs are bred. Tarant can, however, eat the Grubbers and Bubbergrubbers. Once through and Tarant is presented with a simple maze guarded by three Red Backs. If he should get through safely he arrives in another lair where the bugs breed faster. Neat graphics and a pretty maddeningly addictive game to play. Only one life makes for terminal frustration on nearing a hi-score. Continuous movement makes Tarant Tula a bit difficult to control although the control keys are sensibly placed. No joystick option. Overall CRASH rating 67% M/C.

EXTERMINATOR

Producer: Silversoft, 16K £5.95 (1)
Author: I Morrison & D Anderson
This is a very good 'Berserk' type game in which you are pitted against seven types of robot with varying characteristics and one thing in common—they're out to get you! Level promotion occurs automatically on reaching the required number of points. A novel feature is the provision of two sets of control keys which allow either 8-directional movement or rotational movement, both with directional fire. Strategy demands that you shoot up the more dangerous types of robots first to stay alive for longer. Sensible keyboard positions, joystick: Kempston, AGF and Protek. Good value for money, overall CRASH rating 83% M/C.

GAMES DESIGNER

Producer: Quicksilva, 48K £14.95
Author: John Hollis
Packed into a neat Betamax video case, Games Designer offers eight arcade game variations, all of which may be redesigned in most aspects to suit the players' taste. Less of a game than a utility practice mode. You can change between any of the games using the main menu, then alter the design of the sprites such as aliens, missiles, laser bses, ships etc., you can redesign the game format, foreground and background colours, sound effects, patterns of movement, attack waves, and you can then save or reload your redesigned game. The graphics are very good, especially the design of the editors. Games Designer is accompanied by an excellent booklet which tells you how the program may be used. Perhaps the only drawback is that the games already programmed are of a very basic type. Does not require any working knowledge of machine code, although this could be a good way of learning the rudiments. Recommended, overall CRASH rating 89% M/C.

GOLD DIGGER

Producer: Blaby, 48K £4.95
It's all underground and you're tunnelling mines looking for the gold nuggets. Purple gnuggets gnashers are hot on your trail, however, so it is important to dig strategically round the red rocks so you can dislodge them to block off the tunnels or even drop them down and squash the gnashers. Nine speed levels. Joystick: AGF or Protek, Kempston. Cursor keys. Not as addictive as most other Blaby games, but a good beginner's game anyway.

GOLD MINE

Producer: DK Tronics, 16K £4.95
They say this is a strategy game, but that's hardly true. You do need some strategy to go for the gold in the quickest way, but it's not the main ingredient. Use the lift to go up or down from the surface and then dig towards the gold sites. Not everything that glitters is gold though. Tunnels can collapse and there are underground streams. Energy runs out fast underground, especially if you are carrying gold. In addition, the lift may collapse if you are carrying too much weight. Replenish energy by returning to the surface and depositing gold in the bank. In any event, a rather slow game with limited appeal, but probably good value for younger children.

GOLD RUSH

Producer: THORN EMI, 16K £6.95 (1)
Author: Martin Harris
The gold mines of Oron are bottomless caverns where gold nuggets rain down from the roof. The Oronian miners place girders across the caverns to catch the nuggets and direct them into buckets. Life would be pleasant were it not for the skulls that float about eating Oronians and moving the girders around—and of course the falling nuggets can be very painful to an unprotected Oronian head! The screen is split into three equal segments, a safe home to the right to which an Oronian cannot return, a store for the girders to be used on the left, and in the centre the cavern itself. Directional keys move the Oronian about and the firing key positions the girder. Nuggets may roll to the left or the right when hitting a girder, so some strategy is required to keep the structure working to your advantage. Points are scored for a nugget hitting a girder, and more for getting one into a bucket at the base of the screen. At the higher skill levels the skulls will eat the nuggets as they fall. Unfortunately, there's no sound, but the graphics are smooth and colourful, an unusual and medium addictive game, two keyboard posiitons. Overall CRASH rating 63% M/C.

GRAND PRIX DRIVER

Producer: Britannia, 48K £5.95 (1)
Author: Chris Weber
Along with Thorn EMI's Road Racer and DK Tronics' Speed Duel, a contender for the 3D Spectrum 'Pole Pole Position' game. The effect of the road winding about and the moving landscape in the background is quite good in this version, and the hollow graphics of the racing cars also works quite well, but the main drawback is that your car is quite hard to control. When overtaking, an indicator at the bottom tells you which way the car to be overtaken will veer, but to get past safely it is essential to come almost to a halt. If you manage to pass the 30 cars on the track then a little man appears and wavers a flag to tell you that you've won. Good, if overlong, explosions on crashing. General feeling was that this game can become repetitive quite quickly. Good keyboard positions, joystick: Kempston and Sinclair (Interface 2). Fair to average, overall CRASH rating 55%. Compiled M/C.

GROUND FORCE ZERO

Producer: Titan, 16K £5.00
At first glance it looks like a simple game, but in fact it is quite hard. Very similar to Romik's 'Spectra Smash', which has more options than this version. Your plane keeps crossing the towering skyscrapers of New York, looking for a place to land. There isn't anywhere, so with a genocidal brainwave you decide to bomb the city flat to make a landing strip. With each pass over the city your plane gets lower, so it's essential to knock out the biggest towers before they knock you out. Several skill levels with taller buildings. Simple to play with only a bomb control. Despite its simplicity, reasonably addictive.

GUN LAW

Producer: Vortex, 16K £4.95
In real life the famous James Gang were reputed to be lousy shots, unable to hit a man six feet from them when all five tried to gun him down. However, Vortex have put the whole thing right with this program where, as Marshall, you can stalk them down the dusty streets of town, firing at figures as they appear in doorways and windows. Your reflexes must be fast as you won't get a second chance from these baddies. Bullets are restricted, so it's important not to shoot innocent people. Despatching a baddie earns you dollars. The graphics are generally good, although the gunsight could have been better. Reasonably interesting and addictive.

HUNCHBACK

Producer: Ocean, 48K £5.90 (2)
Author: Chris Urquhart
This turns out to be a worthwhile Spectrum version of the arcade original, its main drawback, perhaps, being that it keeps combining already used elements in geometric progression, which lowers its playing attractiveness. You're Quasimodo (a well known hunchback) and you must cross the castle ramparts to rescue the lovely Esmerelda from her tower prison. There are 15 screens in which you must jump the castellations, swing over fire pits, jump castellations filled with spear raising soldiers, dodge missiles and,do all these things in combination. On each screen there is a red knight climbing up the castle wall. If he reaches the top before you start getting safely across, he sticks his sword somewhere unmentionable. Rope swinging is a very tricky business with correct timing essential—perhaps too finicky. Good control keys, joystick: Kempston, Protek, AGF, Sinclair 2. Skill levels, only 1, lives 3, good value and reasonably addictive. Overall CRASH rating 66%.

JAWS REVENGE

Producer: Workforce, 16K £5.95
This is a game for hungry people. You're a shark on a jaws-agape-feeding-frenzy. Fish, swimmers (moving at Olympic speeds) and boatmen all go down your throat. Some fish have a habit of turning red and poisonous, so don't eat those, and the fishermen in their boats throw harpoons or drop depth charges to stun you. You can catch the depth charges and defuse them before they reach the sea bed. And the sea bed itself isn't flat so don't run into it. It's a sort of Penetrator meets Galaxians under water. An amusing game with good graphics. No joystick option.





JAWZ
Producer: DK Tronics, 16K £4.95
On the same theme, Jawz is the other way round. You must use your underwater gun sights to shoot up the maruding sharks, whilst avoiding the gunge dropping from poisonous jelly fish on the surface. The game was originally made by Elfin — it's being marketed by DK Tronics probably hasn't made all that much difference because unfortunately it has a very limited appeal for serious arcade addicts. Good for younger children.

JUNGLE FEVER
Producer: A&F, 16K £6.90
Get your man to jump over the traps dug by Pigmies and then swing across a pit using a rope tied to a tree. Like 'Hunchback' there are several levels combining elements of jumping, swinging, dodging spears etc. Good fun to play and reasonably addictive but perhaps a little overpriced. No joystick option.

JUNGLE TROUBLE
Producer: Dumell, 16K £6.95
A game with a similar theme to Jungle Fever. Collect an axe and leap across stepping stones set in a crocodile infested river. On the other side you climb a ladder to get to the trees, which you must chop down. The trees will fall on you (if you're not quick to jump out of the way) and they blunt the axe — so back for another. Monkeys live in the trees and steal your axe but you can chop them with it — if it's not already blunt. If they steal it — it's back for another. With the forest laid waste all you have to do is swing across a fire pit using a rope, jump a chasm and then home for tea. A busy game with plenty of opportunities for failure and so pretty addictive.

KNOT IN 3D
Producer: New Generation, 48K £5.95
Extremely hard to see how this extraordinary game works at first. It could really be thought of as a grid game or a bozy boa game but with you as the snake actually in the screen but in a 3 dimensional space. Confused? Well you will be. Steer yourself through the white void avoiding your own brightly coloured trail and that of the chasers, twisting and turning to find space to move in before it all gets filled up. Uses cursor keys so AGF or Protek joystick would help. Tremendous value for money, and addictive too.

LUNA CRABS
Producer: Micromega, 16K £6.95 (1)
Author: Mervyn Escourt
You must know the feeling—there you are, on a Saturnian moon, away from the safety of your explorer's ship, taking samples of moon rocks, when suddenly there are all these nasty red crabs surrounding you and gobbing green spit all over the place. Fortunately, you have your guided missile cannon. Descriptive 3D graphics are effective in this simple shoot-back-at-em game, as you whirl and turn to avoid the green goo and to aim at the fiendish crabs. Good animation and colourful graphics, but in the end a game with limited playng appeal. Sensible control keys, no joystick option and only one skill level. Overall CRASH rating 62% M/C.

LUNAR JETMAN
Producer: Ultimate, 48K £5.50 (1)
The follow-up to 'Jetpac' is, as expected, a fabulous game. If it has a drawback it's that it is too difficult to play, but as is usual with this sort of game, experts can get a long way and prove that you can score! After failing to construct his space shop in 'Jetpac' properly, Jetman has crashed on the moon with only a Moonglider for company, plus a clutch of assorted and unexplained equipment, alien missile bases and hordes of horrible alien creatures. Half the fun of the game is discovering what makes what tick, since Jetman can pick up objects and transport them himself, or drop them on the Moonglider for transport. He can get inside as well, where he's safe from the aliens, and drive the Moonglider along. But it won't cross holes in the ground. These must be filled with bridging units carried on the side of the vehicle. Whenever an alien hits Jetman, it creates another crater. The basic aim of the game is to destroy the alien bases—but this task certainly must rank among the most heroically difficult of all time! Superb graphics and sound (improved with talking aliens if you have a Currah Microspeech unit attached), a lot of well planned keys which make the joystick options (Kempston, AGF, Protek) a bit redundant. One or two player games. Overall CRASH rating 95%—highly recommended. M/C.

MICROBOT
Producer: Softek, 48K £5.95 (2)
Author: Andrew Beale
The scene is set inside a robot's head, whose brain is being damaged by bugs (creepy ones). These robots, however, resemble the basement of some rambling Victorian house with purple pipes in 12 chambers. A scanner keeps you informed of where the worst damage is occurring. Your microbot is armed with repulsa blobs which keep the nasties at bay for a few seconds, but the only way to kill them off (which must be done if the pipes are to remain in a sound condition) is to use the fix-a-tive blobs in each room. Yellow ones kill yellow bugs (as well as fixing green pipes) and blue ones kill blue bugs (and fix purple pipes). The graphics are excellent and the game is fun to play. It could have done with clearer instructions on playing. But in the end it fails to be quite as addictive as it should be, given all the elements in it. Sensible keys, joystick: Kempston, Sinclair 2, AGF, Protek. General rating: very good and original. Overall CRASH figure 73%.

MINED-OUT
Producer: Quicksilva, 48K £4.95
Author: Ian Andrew
Forget the inlay card, which was probably written by a stoned Quicksilva copy writer, and play the game! You are presented with a blank field, densely sown with mines and you must get to the other side without blowing up. Take a step at a time and watch the warning which tells you whether there is a mine in an adjacent square — is it left, right or ahead? What happens when there are two or even three mines? The tension mounts and clever, logical thinking is your only safeguard. Level two offers maidens in distress to be rescued and later levels still confront you with things that chase and make you move quickly. Nine levels in this most nail-biting game. And it hasn't dated a bit, still worth the money if you haven't tried it. Recommended.

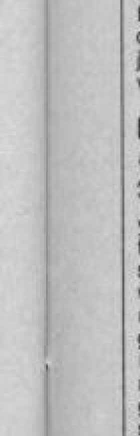
MOLAR MAUL
Producer: Imagine, 16K £5.50
With a wicked glint in their teeth, Imagine invite you to take part in the fight against the DK (Tronics) menace. Your weapons are a toothbrush and some Imagico toothpaste. The screen opens (literally) with a gaping mouth and lively clean white teeth. Toffees and other gunk appear at the centre, exciting the interest of the horrid DK bugs, and in seconds the teeth are beginning to yellow, purple and black out all over the mouth. The trick with this game is manoeuvring the wretched toothbrush into exactly the correct position for the toothpaste to be squeezed from the tube. An excellent game with wonderful graphics, but so depressing to watch! I'm afraid it left an unpleasant taste in my mouth, but I have to say it's good value. Joystick: Fuller.

MRS MOPP
Producer: Computasolve, 48K £5.50 (1)
Author: Tina Billet
The game which sets out to prove that it's better to create a mess than have to clean it up. Mrs Mopp's family must be the messiest in the world. They litter cups, clothes, dust and just about everythng else all over the floor. Moppsie has five utensils to help her in the task, but only the correct utensil will pick up the appropriate rubbish. There's also a kitchen sink, washing machine and dustbin she must use when the utensil carried becomes full. Picking up a utensil is done simply by moving up against it and it can be deposited by reversing the sequence. Like any hard working housewife, Moppsie likes a tipple now and then to keep up her spirits, but if you let her spirit level get too high she becomes drunk and disorderly. If the work load becomes too much, she'll give up and leave home! The only extra aids are magical spells, but all too often these seem to be out of stock. Well placed control keys, joystick: Kempston. Cute graphics, smooth movement and an original game to play. Reasonably addictive, overall CRASH rating 69% M/C.

NAANAS
Producer: Mikrogen, 16K £5.95
The cassette inlay says 'Naanas', the title screen, 'Nanas', obviously a bit confused! Another of Mikrogen's new games which insists that there are user-definable keys when there aren't—obviously a bit confused! The aim of Naanas (or whatever) is to dash around catching bananas which a monkey is throwing down. If they hit the floor and you tread on one, you slip over and lose a life. In addition there are coconuts dropping with painful consequences. And that's it. Graphics are reasonable but pretty simple and the monkey doesn't move at all. The cursor control keys work quite well in this game, no joystick option. Pretty and fun to play for a short while. Overall CRASH rating 52% M/C.

ODYSSEY 1
Producer: Perfection, 16K £5.50 (1)
Author; T Williams
First prize winner of the games section of Computech 83, Odyssey 1 is a three-part mixture of arcade games, designed to test the skills and reflexes of shoot em up freaks. Screen 1 is a 'Berserk' type with your man at the cross roads of four rooms filled with firing robots. He can move in any direction with rotational controls, go forward and fire up or down at will. Getting through this screen lands you up in an 'Arcadia' type situation where wrap around wedges of alien ships fly overhead dropping missiles on you as you shoot up at them. Mean trick here is that once dropped, the missiles wrap around vertically, gradually filling the screen with weaponry. Screen 3 pits you against pterodactyl-like creatures which swoop down in a wholly original and alarming manner. The general feeling of our reviewers was that this was a surprisingly difficult and addictive game to play. The graphics are fairly small but the 100% machine code program makes everything work extremely well and smoothly. No joystick option, overall CRASH rating 72%, recommended.

OSTRON
Producer: Softek, 16K £5.95
Formerly named Joust, Softek for some reason, changed its name. There's a lot of the 'You're the sole surviving White Knight, Guardian, of the Lore, etc' on the inlay blurb, but basically you're on this Ostron thing (electronic ostrich) and the enemy are variously-coloured buzzard thingies. There are several floating platforms on which you can land before rising to the occasion by flapping your wings and attacking the enemy. When you meet, face to face, the one's who's highest wins. First buzzards are pretty daft and easy, but later ones become fiendish in their attempts to get you. All in all a very enjoyable game, with good graphics and sound. Don't hit the water — you drown. 100 percent machine code, joystick: Kempston. Good value.





PARADROIDS

Producer: Mikrogen, 48K £5.95
Author: C Hinsley
If Paradroids scores, it's on its 'differentness'. The idea is to move up and down your energy beam, firing left and right at the paradroids. The jump off the various ledges all the way up the sides of the nuclear reactor you are defending. Should any successfully parachute to the bottom they reach the reactor and mutate into much more vicious droids. The graphics are quite good, brightly coloured, move smoothly and react quickly to the control keys (well laid out). the result is a reasonable game, but somewhere the idea has faltered—it's too easy to play and so becomes boring. The inlay states that there are user-definable keys, but there aren't. Overall CRASH rating 54% M/C.

PAT THE POSTMAN

Producer: Mikrogen, 48K £5.95 (2)
Pat must collect parcels from the houses, take them to the post office, and when he has enough, put them on the train. The town contains 12 houses, a fire station and the post office. Only some houses (varies from game to game) have parcels for collection and if Pat visits any wrong ones, the post office promptly catches fire. He must then dash to the fire station, get the fire engine and douse the blaze before it all burns down. Two red cars travel the town's roads tyring to catch Pat. There are no instructions on game objectives, the graphics are fair but could be smoother and the control keys are the awkward cursors — joystick: Protek or AGF, not very responsive in either case. 2 skill levels, 3 lives. CRASH overall rating 52%.

PI-EYED

Producer: Automata, 48K £6.00 (2)
Author: Andrew Stagg
The famous Piman, success gone to his head, has hit the bottle and rambles drunkenly down the street, weaving in and out of the traffic, entering various buildings and making a nuisance of himself. If you get him into one of the many pubs he must drink every pint on the bar without slipping up on slops and crisp packets or nudging the other drinkers. The game manages to be amusing for a short while, but Piman is diffcult to control and some pints seem impossible to reach (you can't leave a pub until they're all drunk). Simple control keys, joystick: Kempston, AGF, Protek. May appeal to some Pimaniacs but not generally. CRASH overall rating 57% (mostly for the humour). Reverse side of tape contains hit single by Lurch the office parrot!

PSST

Producer: Ultimate, 16K £5.50
It sounds a bit rude but it's a wonderful game with Ultimate's usual magnificent graphics. Robbie the robot must keep the swarming insect life from eating his plant. To do this there are various spray cans lining the brick walls of the garden. Each level adds a different insect to the collection and the trick is that you must use the correct spray on the right insect or it only serves to stun for a moment. The insects also kill off Robbie as well as the plant, which shrinks away if it's eaten for too long. Letting it grow results in a bloom and a new level. Amazing graphics, 100 percent machine code, 8-directional movement, one or two player game, sensible control keys and Kempston joystick. Recommended. Also available in ROM cartridge form for £14.95.

PUNCHY

Producer: Mr Micro, 48K £6.90
In effect this is another 'Hunchback' game, but it has been attractively dressed up in the guise of a Punch and Judy show. You must guide hero Bobby across the stage to rescue Judy, while Punch hurls custard pies at you. There are 16 screens which require jumping over holes, swinging acrosss pits, leaping on magic carpets, dodging soldiers' clubs and always keeping an eye open for those custard pies. Judy sometimes throws a sausage acrosss — if Bobby collects three he can whizz across a screen and onto the next without harm. The graphics are amazingly bright and coloured, well animated and with lots of detail. The game also speaks (without a Speech unit). Sensible control keys, joystick: Kempston and Sinclair 2. Highly rated despite the price, CRASH overall rating 88% m/c.

QUACKERS

Producer: Rabbit, 16K £5.99
Quackers is designed more for children than shoot 'em up addicts, but its cheerful graphics should make it popular. It's set in a fairground duck shooting gallery, where four rows of repeated objects, ducks, cats, rabbits, faces and a giant turtle, move alternately in opposite directions before your gun barrel. User-defined keys or cursor, which means you can use AGF or Protek joysticks.



RACE FUN

Producer: Rabbit, 48K £5.99
The Spectrum hardly has the sort of graphics capability of the big road racing games in the arcades, but as far as Spectrum racers go, this is a pretty good one. An overhead view shows the track which varies from wide to very narrow, straight and curved. Off you go with several others cars. Bumping another car or running off the road, slows you down and costs fuel heavily. The object is to get as many points as possible before running out of petrol. The graphics are very good with the cars being quite large. User-defined control keys (accelerate, brake, left, right) or cursor so you can use a Protek or AGF joystick.

RIDER

Producer: Producer: Virgin Games, 48K £5.95 (1)
Authors: Roy poole & Terry Murray
The writers of 'Yomp' have come up with another quasi-military theme game in two parts. First screen you leap from a plane on a parachute and try to land on one of a stream of riderless motorbikes below. These have been supplied by the resistance movement of the occupied country you are spying on. If you succeed in landing on one it cuts instantly to the second screen. This is a 3D view of a country road, heavily sowed with visible mines, down which you must guide your careering bike. Although the details and large graphics are quite good the game ends up being unplayable. You can't brake and turn at the same time for instance. It all palls very quickly and ends up being much slower than it should. Reasonable control keys, seven skill levels, no joystick option, only a fair game. Overall CRASH rating 50%. Mixture of BASIC and M/C.

RIVER RESCUE

Producer: Thorn EMI, 48K £6.95 (1)
Author: Phil Snell
You're in control of a river speed boat. The screen shows the north and south banks above and below, everything scrolling from right to left. You can hold the boat's position to the left (safer) side, middle or right (dangerous) side. The object is to rescue explorers from the north bank jetty and land them at the south bank jetty. As the two jetties are opposite, you can't just commute between them. The boat can take up to six explorers at a time before landing them, but if you lose the boat, you lose your explorers too. The river is infested with crocodiles, sand banks and logs, which you must avoid. If you're very good, a rival firm overflies the river dropping mines on you. More points scored for travelling at the right of the screen where your reflexes have to be very fast. A fast, addictive and original game with neat graphics. Good control key positions, joystick: Kempston, Sinclair, 1 or 2 player games. Recommended. Overall CRASH rating 74% M/C.

ROAD RACER

Producer: Thorn EMI, 16K £6.95 (1)
Author: Graham Wisdom
As its name implies, this is another contender for the Spectrum 'Pole Position'. The 3D Road/Landscape effect is pretty good, and unlike Britannia's Grand Prix Driver, the graphics are solid. However the road in this version does not actually bend as you go round corners, although the background does move. Controls are very good; in addition to brake/accelerate and left/right, keys 1 and 2 select lo or hi gear. If you use the gears incorrectly you will blow your engine. There are several other cars to overtake before reaching the finishing line. Perhaps one problem with the otherwise excellent inlay card, is that they don't explain how to get going, which is a little confusing at first (see review in issue-1). Bright and large graphics, rather poor sound, joystick: Kempston, Sinclair. Overall CRASH rating 70%—good M/C.

SANTA

Producer: Artic, 16K £5.95
Produced for a rush Christmas market, this tape contains seven different games in a compendium. All the games are short and only one, 'Rudolph Goes Racing' is fair. Judging by the games and games quality, the tape is aimed at younger children and grandmas and probably won't be in circulation for very long. Overall CRASH rating 28%. BASIC.

SCUBA DIVE

Producer: Durrell, 48K £5.50 (2)
Author: Mike Richardson
One of the second issue's Games of the Month — beautiful fishy animation from the largest to the smallest characters. The idea is to dive your man overboard, take him to the seabed and collect pearls from oysters. He may have to wait until they open, and he must not get knocked out on the bottom or run into any of the extremly voracious fish. Oxygen is running out, so back to the surface to find the boat, which moves all over the place. When all the pearls have been collected you must venture past a dreaded octopus and into some lower caves where the pearls from clams are bigger — the clams are more dangerous though. A second octopus guards the entry to yet lower and vaster caves full of treasure and some oxygen bottles to replenish your supply. Down here you can swim for ages, looking for the treasure, but the aquamarine life is even more dangerous. An original game with excellent graphics, the detail of which is quite staggering — a game which makes Spectrum graphics something to be poud of. Very addictive with 4 skill levels, good control keys (user-defined) almost any joystick and a hi-score saving routine. Highly recommended — overall CRASH rating 92% m/c.

SHADOWFAX

Producer: Postern, 16K £5.95
Shadowfax came out with a lot of ballyhoo at £7.95, which was grossly overpriced, so it's nice to see Postern have dropped it now. No one can complain about the graphics which are quite excellent. Unfortunately the game has very little else to offer. You're mounted on your white charger (the inlay blurb might lead to suppose this was some Hobbit-like adventure) and riding



against the black horses that gallop on from the left at random heights. You can fire a bolt at the approaching enemy but you must then explode the bolt at exactly the right moment. And that's the game — you are up against the points. Mind you, it is mesmerising, so you do make mistakes. Definitely a game to get a look at first — if you like the idea, you won't regret the graphics. No joystick option.

SHARK ATTACK

Producer: Romik, 16K £5.99
Author: Ian Anderson
The theme from 'Jaws' works nicely but the rest of the continuous sound will eventually drive you mad. You must save octopusses (or octopi) from the sharks by weaving a protective net around the octopus. Should a shark eat the octopus before you screen it, then the shark can eat your net. Having either succeeded or failed in this task, the rest of the game is to fill up as much of the screen with net without getting eaten yourself. Three levels, one or two player games. Joystick: Kempston or Sinclair. A game with very limited appeal and no addictive qualities, but it might well appeal to younger children, a sort of Painter meets Jaws.

SIEGE

Producer: Postern, 16K £5.99
Author: Mike Singleton
Throw rocks down from a high castle wall onto the massed attackers trying to climb up. As the rocks fall they knock the attackers off, often several at a time as one falling man catches another. The stick figure animation is cute and the game should appeal to younger children, but it is very limited as far as the serious addicted arcade player is concerned. Simple control keys.

SNAKE PIT

Producer: Postern, 16K £5.95
Author: Mike Singleton
This is pacman variant, but it is too original to lump in with the rest of the yellow gobblers. The 'maze' is a live, wriggling one. Seven different coloured snakes are trapped in their nests, surrounded by a screenful of green eggs. Your job is to eat all the eggs. Only the red snake can eat eggs, so it instantly frees itself and begins eating round the screen, freeing the other snakes as it goes. When you meet a snake head on there is a nasty little gulping sound and that's it until you press S for another game. Should you clear the screen you then get a chance to eat the snakes (tail first) as well as the eggs. I never got there; this is very difficult. The graphics are superb, quite enough to turn the stomach! Pity the control keys are so awkward, and no joystick option. Addictive and good value.

SPECTRA SMASH

Producer: Romik, 16K £6.99
Author: John Bell
This is similar to Titan's Ground Force Zero, but rather more complex, in that you have limited height control over the plane, and there are gun turrets on some buildings firing at you, none on the easiest level, more and more on the harder ones. Bombing the guns first obviously helps. Should you land successfully, having bombed the lot flat, the angry natives reward you by sending out a fuel tanker so you can take off and do the thing over again at a higher level. Of course they win in the end! Three lives, hi-score, eight levels, joystick: Kempston, AGF, Protek, Sinclair. m/c. Recommended.

SPECTRON

Producer: Virgin Games, 48K £5.95 (1)
Author: Mark Kirkby
Probably Virgin's best shoot em up, probably their best game in fact. This is a no-win 'Berserk' type game that demands fast reflexes and a sixth sense to get very far. One reviewer was able to count as many as 216 enemy robots on the screen at one time. Enemies include Swarmers, Speeders, Launchers and Electrons (which leave indestructible electronic fences behind them). Your robot fires automatically when on the move and control is 8-directional. Well thought out, with detailed graphics, very good sound, no joystick option but well placed control keys. Overall CRASH rating 77%. Recommended.M/C.

SPEED DUEL

Producer: D K Tronics, 48K £5.95 (2)
Author: K Larter
Another 'Pole Position' version for the Spectrum. This features solid 3D graphics complete with bends, moving horizon and the road seen in a reasonable sort of perspective. There are five circuits to race on and a choice of racing against one to five cars. Your car has savage acceleration, and becomes almost instantly uncontrollable on the tight bends. Crashes seem to happen when you haven't even touched the edge of the road. The graphics (character blocks) are fairly smooth and the colour and detail are good. Sensible keys, no joystick option, generally average value, overall CRASH rating 56% m/c.

SUB CHASE

Producer: Gem, 16K £4.95 (1)
You are in control of a ship equipped with depth charges which can be set to explode at nine different depths depending on which numeric key you select. Beneath you, submarines cross the screen in one direction, occasionally firing missiles up at you which must be dodged. The art is to select the correct depth at which to explode the charge to kill the sub. At higher skill levels the subs change depth randomly. On the whole a game more intended to appeal to younger children. 4 skill levels, reasonable graphics, poor sound, simple control keys. CRASH rating 49%—poor for addicts, good for children. M/C.

TRANZ AM

Producer: Ultimate, 16K £5.50
It's post-holocaust America and the country's a barren desert with a few cities here and there where you can get fuel. Otherwise a clutch of Mad Maxalikes in deadly Black Turbos are out to kill you while you hunt the wastes looking for eight gold cups. The playing screen is only a 600th of the available area. Instruments on the left show; time taken, miles travelled, a map of the States showing cities and your location, local radar showing cups (if any) and enemies, speedo, fuel gauge, engine temperature and lives left. 8-directional movement, excellent graphics, highly playable. Joystick: Kempston. Highly recommended. Also available in ROM cartridge form for £14.95.

TRIAD

Producer: Amba, 16/48K (2)
This tape comprises three games of 'Snackman', 'Sub Track' and 'Treasure Hunt'. One side loads all three into 48K, the other loads individually into 16K. Snackman is a 'Pacman' with 10 playing speeds and 16 different mazes. Sub Track has you in a ship dropping depth charges on the many subs at different depths, while dodging their mines. In Treasure Hunt you must find the quickest way round a fairly complex traditional maze to collect treasures. Once one has been collected another appears somewhere else — all against the clock. All 3 games are rather well done and the tape represents good value for money although there was a feeling that today one might prefer one really original game for the money than three old ones. Sensible control keys, no joystick option, reasonable sound, colour and small graphics, fair to average, overall CRASH rating 55% m/c.

TURBO DRIVER

Producer: Boss (UK), 16K £5.95
Another for the racing car addicts. Turbo Driver features very large vehicle graphics and an attempt (not entirely successful) at 3D through perspective. Six other cars leap away from the starting line when you stall. You must catch them up. The cars and several other hazards make life difficult, and if you go too carefully you'll run out of fuel. The track is quite straight, and there aren't those wonderful explosions of the original arcade version, but this is a popular programme and does as well as the Spectrum will allow. m/c. Joystick: Kempston.

3D ANT ATTACK

Producer: Quicksilva, 48K £6.95 (1)
Author: Sandy White
Some of the best ever 3D graphics for the Spectrum which work excellently not only on the numerous buildings but also on the softer forms of the hero, heroine, and dreaded ants which swarm through the walled city of Antescher. The object of the game is to jump over the one spot low enough in the outer wall, find your girlfriend (or boyfriend—you can select which), and escape before the ants get you. You can run and jump in four directions, throw grenades to kill the ants over varying distances, or stun them by jumping up and down on them. The scene can be viewed from any one of four angles. It isn't easy! There are 12 control keys required and it takes a lot of time to get used to them, but the graphics make it all worthwhile. One criticism aimed at the game is that there's more technical virtuosity in the program than game play and it can become repetitive after a while. Nevertheless, an amazing game. No joystick option really possible. Very highly recommended, overall CRASH rating 85% M/C.



3D TUNNEL

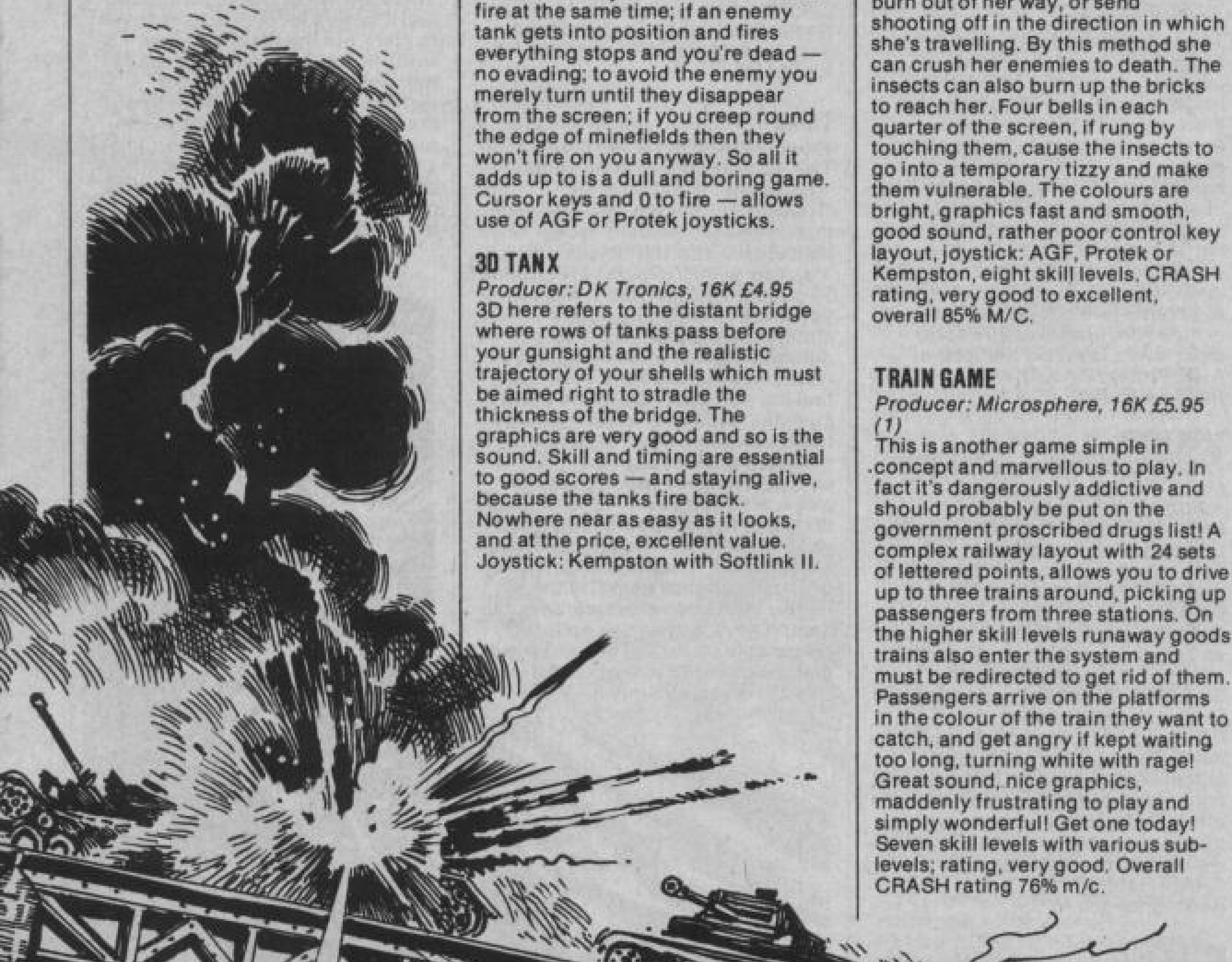
Producer: New Generation, 16/48K £5.95

You're rushing headlong down a tunnel and different objects flash past you, which you must shoot. There's bats, spiders, rats and finally a delightful Underground train, complete with twinkling headlights and passengers inside. The latter must be dodged rather than shot. Running into the sides of the tunnel cause loss of a life (five in all), and you can undertake this subterranean madness at three speeds. In 16K it loads in two parts and there is no Underground train. Mixed opinions, some liked it, some didn't.

3D VORTEX

Producer: J K Greye, 16K £5.95

This is very similar to 3D Tunnel, except that the tunnel (or vortex) is defined in multitudes of coloured dots rather than solid blocks, which gives more of a tunnel-like feel. The tunnel also twists and squirms like a mad thing so it's quite a trick to stay safely in the centre of it. On the other hand, the 3D animation of the objects isn't quite so good and there are no skill levels which means it quickly loses interest. There is a long but very amusing intro in the 2-part load. User-defined control keys, so it works with almost any joystick. Good value but limited playability.



3D DEATHCHASE

Producer: Micromega, 16K £6.95 (1)
Author: Mervyn Escourt

Selected as Game Of The Month in issue 1, this is just a fabulous game. The idea is simple; at the base of the screen is the front of your motorbike with two gloved hands gripping the handlebars. Ahead is a flat landscape with a few trees and two other bikers circling around. As soon as you accelerate to give chase they ride hell for leather. When you're in range you can start firing. When they're both blown away the scene changes to night time and repeats, then back to day 2 and so on. Occasionally a helicopter and a tank cross the horizon and gain more points for you if hit. Bu what makes this game one of the most compelling to play are the trees you must weave through in pursuit of the enemy bikers. With each screen they get more numerous, and the effect ol whipping through them is truly alarming! Return of The Jedi has nothing on this! Excellent graphics (marvellous explosions), superb sound, sensible control keys, joystick: Kemptson. Excellent. Overall CRASH rating 92% M/C.

3D DESERT PATROL

Producer: Computer Rentals, 16K £5.95

This simply isn't a very good program. The 3D is primitive and the graphics uninteresting. You must take your tank in between minefields to the eventual safety of a road, whilst avoiding fire of enemy tanks. For a start off you cannot move and fire at the same time; if an enemy tank gets into position and fires everything stops and you're dead — no evading; to avoid the enemy you merely turn until they disappear from the screen; if you creep round the edge of minefields then they won't fire on you anyway. So all it adds up to is a dull and boring game. Cursor keys and 0 to fire — allows use of AGF or Protek joysticks.

3D TANX

Producer: DK Tronics, 16K £4.95

3D here refers to the distant bridge where rows of tanks pass before your gunsight and the realistic trajectory of your shells which must be aimed right to stradle the thickness of the bridge. The graphics are very good and so is the sound. Skill and timing are essential to good scores — and staying alive, because the tanks fire back. Nowhere near as easy as it looks, and at the price, excellent value. Joystick: Kempston with Softlink II.



PUSH OFF

Producer: Software Projects, 16K £5.95 (1)
Author: Andrew Giles

There are now several Spectrum versions of the arcade original, 'Pengy' available—Blaby's 'Dodo' was one of the first. Software Projects' version is excellent. Bertha the ladybird is in a garden being pursued by four nasty insects out for her ichor (blood to you). The garden is full of green bricks which she can burn out of her way, or send shooting off in the direction in which she's travelling. By this method she can crush her enemies to death. The insects can also burn up the bricks to reach her. Four bells in each quarter of the screen, if rung by touching them, cause the insects to go into a temporary tizzy and make them vulnerable. The colours are bright, graphics fast and smooth, good sound, rather poor control key layout, joystick: AGF, Protek or Kempston, eight skill levels. CRASH rating, very good to excellent, overall 85% M/C.

TRAIN GAME

Producer: Microsphere, 16K £5.95 (1)

This is another game simple in concept and marvellous to play. In fact it's dangerously addictive and should probably be put on the government proscribed drugs list! A complex railway layout with 24 sets of lettered points, allows you to drive up to three trains around, picking up passengers from three stations. On the higher skill levels runaway goods trains also enter the system and must be redirected to get rid of them. Passengers arrive on the platforms in the colour of the train they want to catch, and get angry if kept waiting too long, turning white with rage! Great sound, nice graphics, maddenly frustrating to play and simply wonderful! Get one today! Seven skill levels with various sub-levels; rating, very good. Overall CRASH rating 76% m/c.

WHEELIE

Producer: Microsphere, 48K £5.95 (2)

Overall on percentage, the highest rated game in issue 2, and a worthy follow up to their excellent Train Game. You are riding the ultimate motorbike in Nightmare Park, a place full of lethal animals like hedgehogs and kangaroos all trained in Karate! The park has four 'floors', interconnected by hills and optional hills. You must drive along, collecting fuel on the way, avoid the animals, drive carefully over ice, leap buses and cars, do 'wheelies' over humps in the road and squeal to a halt before running to dead ends. If you get to the far right of the park you will wake the Ghost Rider who will race you back to the start. He may travel slower than you, but can do it in a straight line, whereas you must retrace your path through all the obstacles. The graphics are amazing, the biker is really well drawn and animated, falling off his machine in all sorts of different and realistic ways, depending on the particular accident that befalls him. It takes reall skill to get through. Quite good control keys but they may be user-defined. Almost any joystick will work. A very difficult and challenging game with progressively difficult skill levels. Rated as addictive, generally excellent and very good value. Overall CRASH rating 93% m/c.

WILD WEST HERO

Producer: Timescape, 48K £5.90 (1)
Author; Silicon Kid (!?)

Step out into the cacti-strewn desert and fight it out with rampaging gangs of banditos in this good 'Berserk' type game. Instead of maze walls there are the cacti and treacherous trees, which kill on contact. You're armed with a continuous repeat firing Colt 45—and just as well, the bandits are numerous. One of the best 'Berserk' games yet with large graphics, smooth movement, sensible control keys, joystick: Kempston. Good sound, increasingly difficult screens. Overall CRASH rating 83% M/C. Recommended.

ZIP ZAP

Producer: Imagine, 48K £5.50
Author: Ian Weatherburn

In Zip Zap you are a severely damaged robot with a motor that won't turn off and only limited braking power, so you tend to travel in circles. A teleport delivers you (nice graphic) into a swirling mass of miserable aliens from whose deadly touch you are partly protected by a failing shield. The idea is to buzz chaotically around in confusing circles to collect four power units. When you touch one it automatically attaches itself to the teleportal. When all four are in position you can get back to the teleportal in time. By Imagine's standards, not their best game, but still better than most games around. Joystick: Kempston, AGF, Protek, Fuller.

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The Snowman

Producer: **Quicksilva**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£6.95**
Language: **Machine code**
Author: **David Shea**

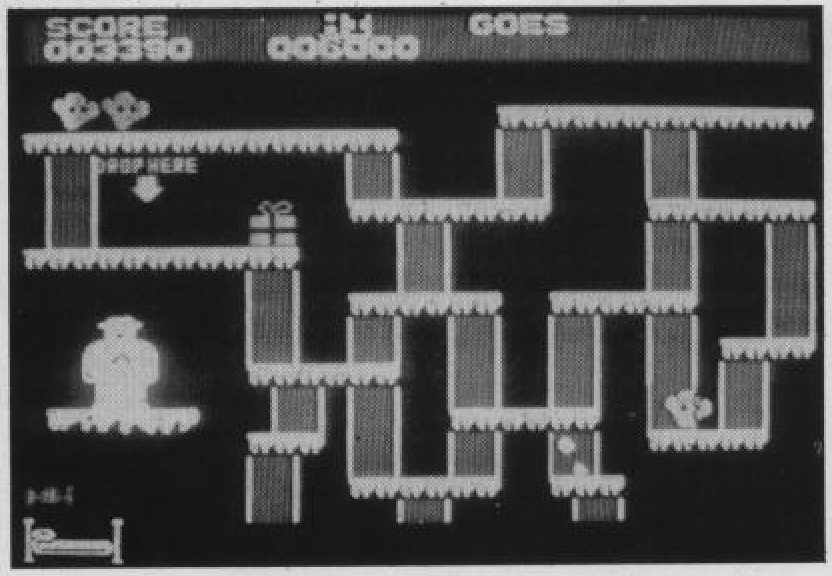
The Snowman is based on episodes from Raymond Briggs' book of the same name — a very gentle comic strip story which uses absolutely no words, and conveys the story entirely in its pictures.

The game comprises four stages, each with its own screen layout. It falls into the category of a platform game. In stage one you must collect six pieces of snow and drop them in the correct place, which results in the snowman being gradually built. There are gas flames darting about which will melt the snow if you touch one after picking it up and replace it elsewhere on the screen. Collecting an ice lolly earns a bonus and at the same time enables you to freeze a flame while the bonus is being counted up. Other objects award points — Christmas crackers, presents, stockings and a tree.

Stage two has you trying to collect the snowman's scarf, hat, nose, buttons, eyes and smile, but there are sleep monsters trying to put you to sleep — an alarm clock will freeze one temporarily.

Stage three, and it's the snowman's tie, glasses, trousers, torch, skateboard and balloons, and again the sleep, monsters are on the rampage.

In stage four you must collect six ice cubes to stop the snowman from melting, but the gas flames are back again. In all four stages your energy is depleted and must be replaced by eating food which appears randomly for a few moments. That gets you going, but the next part of the game has a different screen layout.



There's no business like snow business . . .

CRITICISM

'*The Snowman* is an arcade game, although from its packaging you could be forgiven for thinking of it as a children's game, In fact it is a good arcade game, fun to play and has attractive graphics. The frosty blue colour adds to the effect too. My main criticism is that you have to be lined up exactly to climb or descend and the same can be said of moving off onto a ledge.'

'With fourteen ledges and twenty 'ladders' in the first screen this turns out to be no namby pamby game at all. It's true that the monsters aren't actually chasing you, at least the gas flames don't try and 'get you', but once you have that snow, it's a fraught business getting is safely to the dropping point, especially when energy is falling and there isn't a christmas pud or turkey to eat in sight. Accuracy is essential when changing direction, and it's very easy to fall off a ledge, which results in 'you' falling all the way into your bed at the base of the screen. Surprisingly addictive.'

'This is a very original game idea, although the basic format is quite a familiar one. I found it a little irritating at first that it's so hard to line your man up to change direction — you are forced to keep the change of direction key pressed while still moving in the first direction, so that the change is made automatically at an intersection. This, all too often, results in falling off a ledge! On the other hand it does increase the skill required. I soon found that the keyboard is best — the finickiness of control seems even worse with a joystick. Despite the control problems, *The Snowman* turns out to be a frustratingly addictive game. Good!'

COMMENTS

Control keys: second row = up, third row = down, alternate keys on bottom = left and right
Joystick: Kempston, AGF, Protek, cursor clip on
Keyboard play: better than joystick, responsive, but finiky control because of pixel movement
Use of colour: very good
Graphics: very good, pixel moving
Sound: useful rather than exciting
Skill levels: 1
Lives: 3
Screens: 4
General rating: very good, addictive.

Use of computer	68%
Graphics	89%
Playability	83%
Getting started	80%
Addictive qualities	70%
Value for money	78%
Overall	**78%**



Confrontation

Producer: **M C Lothlorien**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£7.95**
Language: **Basic**
Author: **R.T. Smith**

This game comes excellently pacakaged in a plastic snap shut case, but the cover picture is a little misleading, or rather odd anyway, a montage of Napolean, Montgommery and Rommel, yet the game is a modern scenario — Napoleon never saw tanks, Monty and Rommel weren't all to familiar with jet fighter aircraft either! 14 pages of instructions accompany the tape and are essential reading before play.

In most respects, this game follows the usual pattern of Lothlorien war games where two players (in this case, rather than one against the computer) are each given 12 various units to move about the battlefield until they encounter an enemy unit. This scenario is made more complex by the addition of various air forces, however units may only move one square per turn, so having aircraft doesn't mean zipping about the place any faster.

Units include; tanks, mechanised infantry, flak, anti-tank guns, scouts, infantry, artillery, paratroopers, fighter planes, ground attack planes and transport planes onto which paratroopers may be embarked, and from

which they may jump. Other elements are; airfields, bridges, cities, forts, hills, mountains, marshes, towns and woods.

There is a master program on the tape which offers you the opportunity of then loading an already saved scenario. You may also redesign the terrain and alter the content of the units. After the master programme comes a pre-programmed scenario called 'Twin River'.

CRITICISM

'This is a very complex game compared to many that Lothlorien have done in the past, and it takes some getting into. Unfortunately there is so much to do that it takes ages to get through a phase or turn. I see from the instructions that Lothlorien are intending to release various scenarios that will go with this master program in much the same way that the pre-programmed 'Twin River' on this tape is used. In theory it makes this a very flexible wargamers' program — indeed you can create a scenario which is not modern or 20th century by deleting modern ordnance from the scenario — but I wonder whether the program here is really good enough for that. It is quite slow, virtually everything being in BASIC, and, as usual with these types of game, the graphics are quite small.'

In my opinion, this type of game is only suitable for people who like war games/strategy games, and apart from its new feature (design your own battlefield) it's fairly typical of the rest of Lothlorien's programs. If you like those, you'll undoubtedly enjoy this one. I think a drawback is that it is for two players withou a single player versus the computer option.'

'There are lots of keys and functions to master and most of the instructions appear to be written for experienced wargamers. For the general buyer of games the program has serious drawbacks; the graphics are small, one character size, the BASIC is slow and you have to keep looking up the graphic symbols in the instructions to interpret them. After this time and this number of war games, I would have thought programmers could have made greater strides towards better looking games than this.'

COMMENTS

Control keys: many keys
Keyboard play: input commands taken rapidly, but general processing of commands takes time
Colour: quite well used
Graphics: generally poor
Sound: very rare
General rating: reasonable for war game addicts, only fair otherwise.

Use of computer	**50%**
Graphics	**45%**
Playability	**37%**
Getting started	**43%**
Addictive qualities	**50%**
Value for money	**42%**
Overall	**45%**

Bug Blaster

Producer: **Crystal Computing**
Memory required: **16K**
Retail price: **£6.50**
Language: **Machine code**
Author: **D. Fowlds**

The 'Centipede' rampages on in this new all action arcade game from Crystal with a ludicrously short loading time (are they using Microdrives already?) There's all these green amoebae whizzing about the screen, gradually getting lower and threatening your laser base. They do this as individuals, not as segments of some greater beast, often splitting into two and generally multiplying. There's also lots of what might be described as dead amoebal slime in clumps everywhere, which must be shot away (the mushrooms) to give you a clear firing path. Any amoeba shot, turns into more icky blue stuff.

As you might expect, all this decaying, primordial sludge attracts a lot of flies, and after them, a lot of lizards which threaten you. Your laser base may move from left to right and up or down by about four character squares. Like their other release this month *CYber Zone* this game has voice activation for firing the laser although it isn't guaranteed to work and depends on your tape recorder.



A 'Galaxo-centipede' from Bug Blaster.

CRITICISM

'The graphics, although fairly small, are nicely detailed and very fast moving with little perceptible jerkiness. The game type doesn't exactly appeal to me, but htis is certainly one of the most exciting versions I've seen yet with a fast and furious pace. It could have been even better if there were more skill levels with different things happening.'

'After playing several versions quite a few times I've become rather tired of 'Centipedes', but this one changes all that. Smooth graphics, fast action and excellent sound, plus the 'revamp' of the basic idea put new life into this arcade pensioner! It's fun and does have a certain amount of addictiveness.'

'I think the game idea palls after a bit of playing, but while you are getting the hang of it, it's great fun to play, nice and fast, with very satisfying explosions helped by the excellent sound.'

COMMENTS

Control keys: Z/X = left/right, N/M = up/down, SPACE = fire, Pity the direction keys are in a straight line. There does seem to be auto fire, however, which makes life easier
Joystick: none
Keyboard play: responsive and fast
Use of colour: average
Graphics: small but good
Sound: excellent
Skill levels: 1
Lives: 5
General rating: good, medium addictive.

Use of computer	**70%**
Graphics	**75%**
Playability	**69%**
Getting started	**63%**
Addictive qualities	**63%**
Value for money	**65%**
Overall	**68%**

Lunar Rescue

Producer: **C.R.L.**
Memory required: **16K**
Retail price: **£5.95**
Language: **BASIC & some m/c**
Author: **B. Rowlingson**

Lunar Rescue is, of course, a 'Lunar Lander' game, where you must guide your rescue craft down from the mothership to the moon's surface to collect stranded astronauts one at a time and take them back to the mothership. In this version the moon is surrounded by a dense belt of asteroids, five layers in fact, moving in two directions and at differing speeds, through which the craft must be guided. Below, there are three landing places — a small, medium and a large one. With each successful landing, the large and medium landing areas become smaller, making a docking harder.

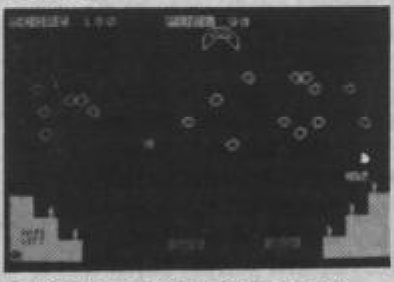
The ship is undocked from the mothership by using the thrust button. Take off from the moon's surface is automatic after an astronaut has climed on board. If you rescue all six astronauts, the next level has more asteroids.

CRITICISM

'Two years ago I'm sure this would have been a thrilling game for any owner of a

ZX81 or even the incredible new Spectrum, but today it just looks silly. The graphics are primitive in the extreme with unanimated character block movement and virtually no use of colour at all, just red, green and yellow stripes for the landing platforms. The game is reasonably hard to play, but we've just become used to playing better looking games than this.'

'This game is in BASIC (with a very little machine code for some of the graphics) and therefore has obvious limitations, eg. jerky graphics (character movement). The game is average in play but it's rather out of date, and anyway there are much better versions around.'



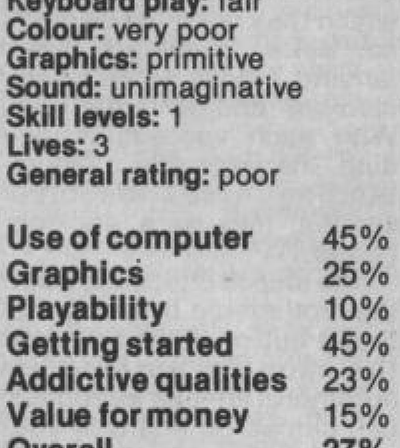
A wing nut in the sky and cafe tables on the ground — poor Lunar Lander.

'*Lunar Rescue* looks like a coloured up ZX81 game although there's hardly any colour in it. Getting through the asteroids is not easy — there's a left/right control and a thrust key, which is described in the inlay as 'increases your thrust'. In fact pressing it slows you down. Not very good.'

COMMENTS

Control keys: 1/2 = left/right, 0 = thrust
Joystick: none
Keyboard play: fair
Colour: very poor
Graphics: primitive
Sound: unimaginative
Skill levels: 1
Lives: 3
General rating: poor

Use of computer	**45%**
Graphics	**25%**
Playability	**10%**
Getting started	**45%**
Addictive qualities	**23%**
Value for money	**15%**
Overall	**27%**



Fred

Producer: **Quicksilva**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£6.95**
Language: **Machine code**
Author: **Charlie, Paco & Fernando of Indescomp**

These are the authors who brought you the colourful *Bugaboo (The Flea)*. Fred is an intrepid explorer who goes about collecting valuable treasure from tombs, in this case the Pyramid of Tootiecarmoon. The insides of the Pyramid take the form of a very large maze, several of them in fact. This isn't a maze in plan, but a vertical cross section, so Fred is forever going up, down or left and right. He goes vertically by way of the numerous ropes hanging from the ceiling far above. The playing area only shows a small fraction of the whole maze and scrolls along with Fred in the centre.

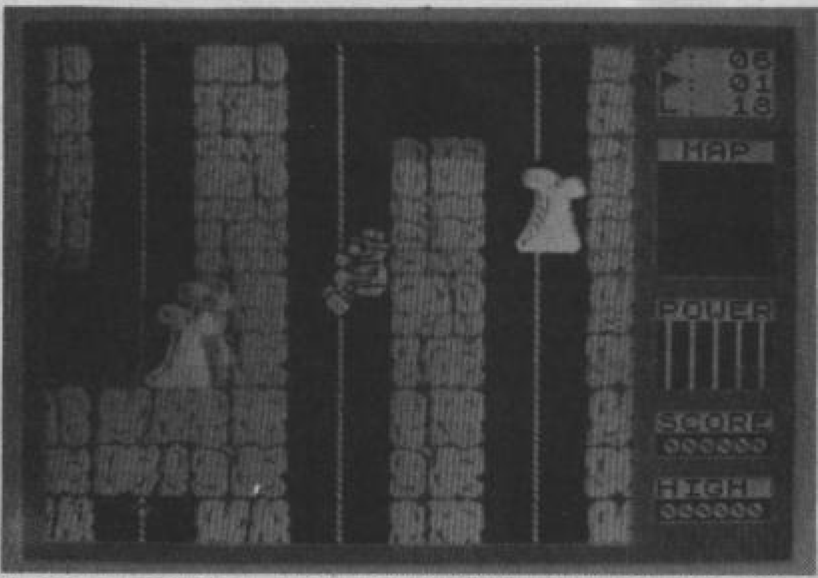
Naturally this venture is fraught with problems in the shape of rats, which must be jumped at the right moment, acid drops (from the decomposing mixtures of the Egyptian magicians), ghosts which go through wall but change direction when shot, mummies that fall down the vertical shafts and can teleport when they land or get hit by a bullet, vampires which can be shot (silver bullets no doubt) and of course the ubiquitous skeletons which chase relentlessly and can only be stopped with a shot.

All these horrors not surprisingly drained Fred of power. Only by drinking the magic elixir of Nefertiti or reaching an exit can Fred's power be regained. Fred is armed with a gun and six shots, and may be aided by finding a map to the tomb. Bonus points are awarded for picking up the various treasures.

There are six screens of increasing difficulty, but there is also an option to redefine the maze and numbers of monsters.

CRITICISM

'The game has great animation, esecially that of Fred himself, and the graphics are generally excellent. Even Fred's revolver



"Going up — 2nd floor, ghostly lingerie, 3rd floor, vampire attire, top floor, mummies' rest room."

recoils when it is fired! There isn't a lot of colour, but what there is makes a good balance and creates atmosphere. It isn't an easy game to play either, which makes it addictive and great fun. I hope Indescomp bring out much more software. I think I spotted two bugs; on several games I didn't start with any bullets, and in one game the scoring went mad, so that I scored every time I moved. I eventually ended up with, wait for it — 818,300 points! I like this game!'

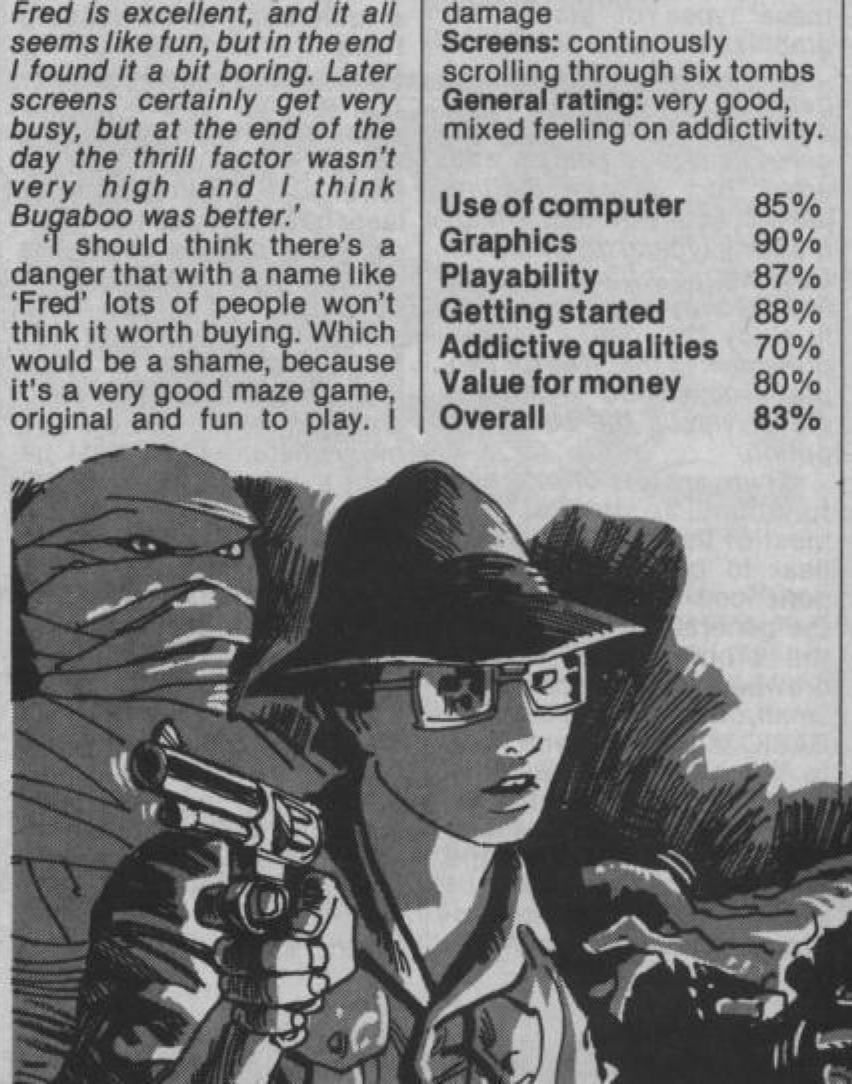
'Because of the general design of the maze and because you can only see a small part of it at any time, this is quite a difficult game to play. I like the graphics, Fred is excellent, and it all seems like fun, but in the end I found it a bit boring. Later screens certainly get very busy, but at the end of the day the thrill factor wasn't very high and I think Bugaboo was better.'

'I should think there's a danger that with a name like 'Fred' lots of people won't think it worth buying. Which would be a shame, because it's a very good maze game, original and fun to play. I didn't think it all that addictive, however, but still well worth a go.'

COMMENTS

Control keys: Q/W = left/right, E/R = down/up, T to fire, or user-definable
Joystick: Kempston, but most others via user-definable**Keyboard play:** fairly responsive, positioning of Fred must be accurate
Colour: good, muted colours
Graphics: very good
Sound: average
Skill levels: progressive difficulty
Lives: percentage of damage
Screens: continously scrolling through six tombs
General rating: very good, mixed feeling on addictivity.

Use of computer	**85%**
Graphics	**90%**
Playability	**87%**
Getting started	**88%**
Addictive qualities	**70%**
Value for money	**80%**
Overall	**83%**



cut along line



CRASHTIONNAIRE



Help us help you and have the chance of a fabulous software prize!



We have now received a massive mail bag resulting from the first two issues of **CRASH**. Many of these letters have raised a number of interesting points both about the magazine and software in general. Therefore we have devised this questionaire which will give you an opportunity to tell us what you think about **CRASH**, and will give us some pointers to improving standards of presenting information in a way you like. We also hope it will be of benefit to the software houses.

So it is very important that as many of you as possible complete the form and send it back to us. All the names and addresses will go into the bag and the first drawn out will win **£50 worth of software** of his or her choice **plus a CRASH T-shirt**, and the three runners up will each receive a **3-month subscription to CRASH** (or an extension if already subscribers) **plus a CRASH T-shirt**.

If you don't want to cut up the magazine, photocopies are acceptable or even written replies (but please remember to number your replies accordingly so we know what's what)! All forms received will be treated in the strictest confidence, the names and addresses being detatched from the form and then destroyed after the draw has been made. But if you wish to leave off your name and address we don't mind — but you won't be able to go into the draw of course!

Forms may be accepted for the draw up until **last post 19th. April** and the results of the draw will appear in the June issue; the results of the questionnaire appearing as soon as we can collate them!

SECTION A PERSONAL

1a What type of programs do you prefer?
*Arcade/Adventure/Simulation/Utility

2a If **"Arcade"** please list favourite types (using CRASH GUIDE HEADINGS
Your list:

3a How many computer (related) magazines do you buy on a regular basis?
I buy__________magazines regularly

4a Which magazines are these?
Your list:

5a Including CRASH, how do you rate the magazines you buy regularly on a scale out of 10?
Your rating:

SECTION B CRASH & REVIEWS

1b Delete any of the words which you feel **DO NOT** accurately describe CRASH:
Useful/Entertaining/Good value/Informative/Accurate/Fair
Useless/Boring/Poor value/Uninformative/Inaccurate/Unfair

2b Has reading CRASH influenced recent games purchasing?
*yes/no/sometimes

3b If **"yes"** to 2b, on actually playing the new game have you agreed with the CRASH review?
*always/most times/half/occasionally/never

4b Do you think the reviews of new games are fine as they are?
*yes/no/don't know

5b If **"no"** to 4b, then should they be:
*longer/shorter/more detailed/less detailed/more technical/less technical?

6b Do you think it's a good idea for 3 reviewers to do a game?
*yes/no/don't know

7b If **"no"** to 6b, why?
Your reasons

8b Do you like to have a rating system of some sort?
*yes/no/don't know

9b Do you think the present CRASH rating system works:
*excellent/reasonably/averagely/poorly?

10b Do you agree with the present headings used for rating?
*yes/no/don't know

11b Do you think the average-out rating of **OVERALL** is useful?
*yes/no/don't know

12b Are there any other headings you would like to see used?
*yes/no/don't know

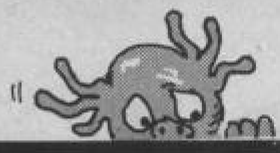
13b If **"yes"** to 12b, please list the other headings.
Your list:

SECTION C COMMENTS & SCREENS

1c Do you like the **COMMENTS** section in reviews in CRASH?
*yes/no/don't know

2c Does the **COMMENTS** section work:
*excellently/reasonably/averagely/poorly?

cut along line



CRASHTIONNAIRE

3c Under **COMMENTS**, are there any other details you would like to see listed?
Your list:

4c Do you think screen pictures are useful?
*yes/no/don't know

6c Do you think the screens in CRASH are:
*good/average/poor?

7c How much does seeing a screen in a magazine influence when buying the game?
*a lot/half time/a little/never

Please write clearly, printing preferably.

Name ____________________

Address ____________________

____

Postcode ____________ Age...........

CRASH, PO BOX 10, LUDLOW, SHROPSHIRE SY8 1DB

SECTION D GENERAL

1d Would you like to see more articles than at present in CRASH?
*yes/no/don't know

2d Please tick your preferences for articles about:

- Add-ons
- Utilities
- Educational
- Computer technicalities
- Software houses
- Programmers
- Games playing tips
- Adventure playing tips
- Other computers

3d Would you like to see a short story included in CRASH?
*yes/no/don't know

4d Do you like **THE TERMINAL MAN** comic strip?
*yes/no/don't know

5d If **"no"** to 4d, is this because you:
*don't like comics/don't like this particular story/don't think a comic belongs in CRASH?

6d Do you like the **CRASH HOTLINE?**
*yes/no/don't know

7d Will you be voting every month?
*yes/no/sometimes

8d Do you think a chart based on a popular vote is useful?
*yes/no/don't know

9d Do you think we should make separate charts for:
Arcade, Adventure, Simulation, Utility?
*yes/no/don't know

10d If CRASH was to expand to include software for other computers would this:
*irritate/disturb/interest/not bother you?

11d Do you miss the fact that there are no program listings in CRASH?
*yes/no/don't know

12d Would you want us to use up space to include some program listings?
*yes/no/don't know

SECTION E SOFTWARE

1e In general do you think current Spectrum software is good value for money?
*yes/no/don't know

2e Are exciting, well designed cassette covers important?
*yes/no/don't know

3e Do you think software houses should put instructions **and** objectives both **on** the insert and **on** the screen?
*yes/no/doesn't matter

4e Does the quality or excitement of a cassette inlay cover influence you to buy the game?
*yes/no/don't know/sometimes

5e On a scale out of 10 how do you rate the effect of covers in influencing you to buy a game?
Your rating:____

6e Do magazine reviews affect your decision to buy a game?
*yes/no/sometimes

7e Do you always buy games from famous software houses even if you don't know about the game?
*yes/no/sometimes

8e Forgetting joysticks, give the combination of control keys you most prefer for 4 directions and fire:

up__key
down__key
left__key
right__key
fire__key

9e Among the most commonly used control keys, which layout do you most dislike?

up__key
down__key
left__key
right__key
fire__key

10e If you were about to buy a computer **other than the Spectrum**, what would it be?

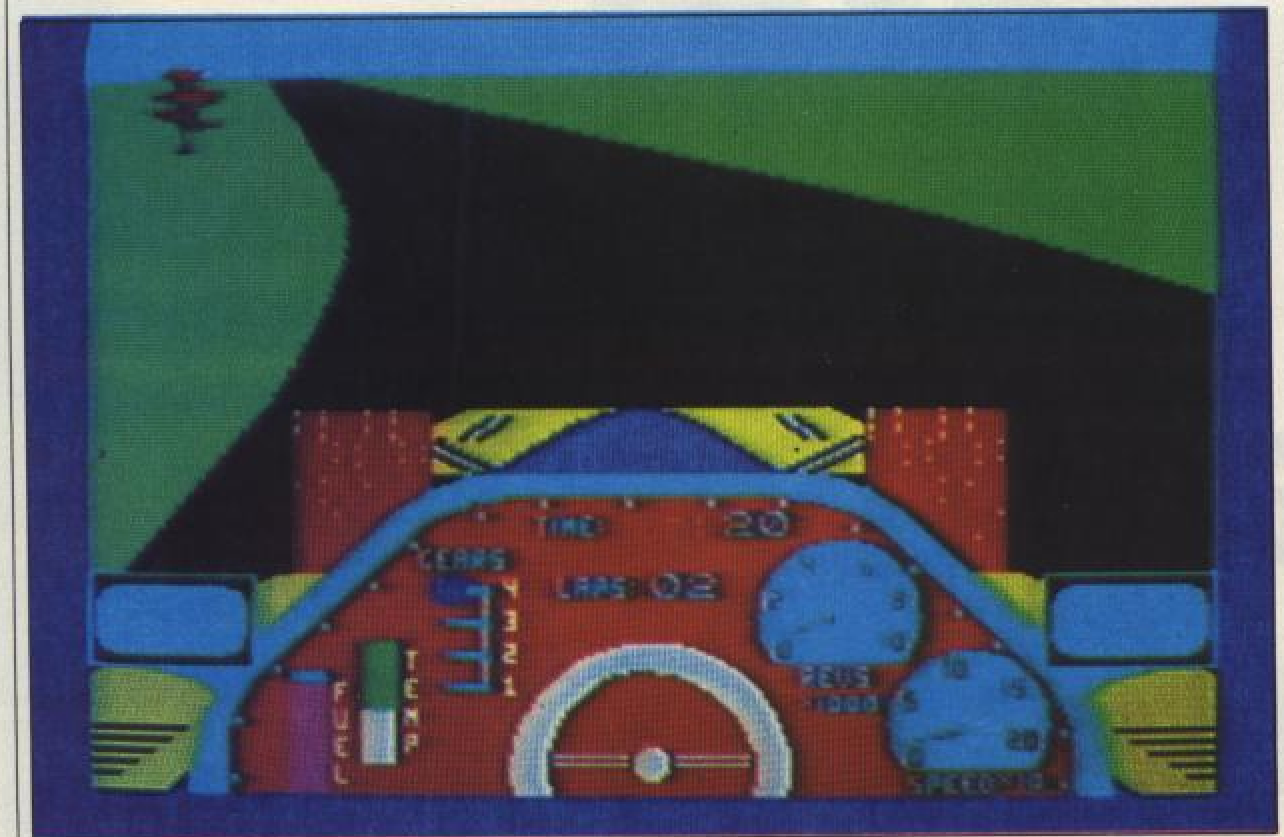
I would buy a ____________

This concludes our questionaire.



cut along line

cut along line



The McFaster Special careers out of control round Brands Hatch.

Chequered Flag

Producer: **Psion Sinclair**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£6.95**
Language: **Machine code**

We are still left waiting for the definitive Spectrum version of the 'Pole Position' type game. *Chequered Flag* isn't it — what it is, however, is the most sophisticated program for the Spectrum with motor racing as its theme.

You are offered options to race on ten different race tracks, based on real international courses like Monaco (no buildings though), Brands Hatch and Silverstone, and with three different types of car; the nice easy automatic McFaster Special, the more difficult Psion Pegasus, or the very powerful, four gear Feretti Turbo. These choices are nicely presented with a lit window around the graphic devices which can be selected by using SPACE and ENTER.

The instrument display features speedo, rev counter, fuel and temperature gauges, gear selection indicator, timer and lap counter. You may select to race from one lap upwards. The tracks have hazards like oil and water on the road which will upset the car's performance and may even cause you to crash. Putting a wheel off the road does not cause an instant accident, but will if you perisit. There may also be glass on the road, which can cause tyres to burst with dramatic consequences. The road ahead is seen in full perspective, although the horizon is flat, and includes bends and hills.

CRITICISM

'All the graphics work very well in this game — actually it's more like a simulation than an exciting game. You can see the nose of your car with the wheels turning, and the steering wheel, which revolves correctly, and then the road ahead. I was a bit worried that there were no hands on the steering wheel! But the great drawback to ultimate fun is the lack of any other cars on the circuit with you.'

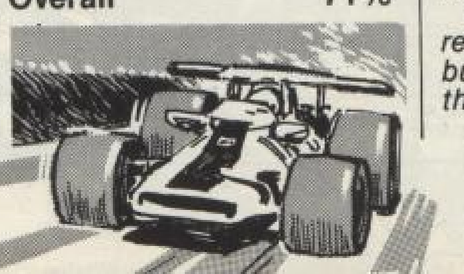
'I get the feeling that Psion see themselves in a rather serious light — which isn't to say that Chequered Flag *isn't fun to play, but its appeal palls when you get the hang of guiding the various cars and begin to realise that there's no real competition spirit in it. Other cars would have been a help of course. Still, the graphics are quite impressive. Pity there are so many keys to handle, although they are quite sensibly laid out.'*

'Chequered Flag looks wonderful enough and plays very well — it's what I would call a 'kind' program because it allows you to edge off the road without killing you off. But because you are definitely in the car and not outside looking down on it, it creates a simulation rather than game feeling which left me thinking, yes very good, but a bit cold.'

COMMENTS

Control keys: accelerate 0, brake 1, fast/slow left A/S, slow/fast right D/F, change up M, change down N
Joystick: none
Keyboard play: responsive
Use of colour: good
Graphics: very good 3D effect, detailed
Sound: average, continuous
Skill levels: 3 cars
Lives: 1
Screens: 10 circuits
General rating: a good simulation, not a very addictive game.

Use of computer	58%
Graphics	89%
Playability	68%
Getting started	85%
Addictive qualities	52%
Value for money	75%
Overall	**71%**



Monkey Bizness

Producer: **Artic**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£5.95**
Language: **Machine code**

Monkey Bizness is a 'Kong' game, and a fairly comprehensive one at that with eight screens. The ladders and girders are about the most detailed for the Spectrum. It also boasts the first 3D barrels, which are enormous.

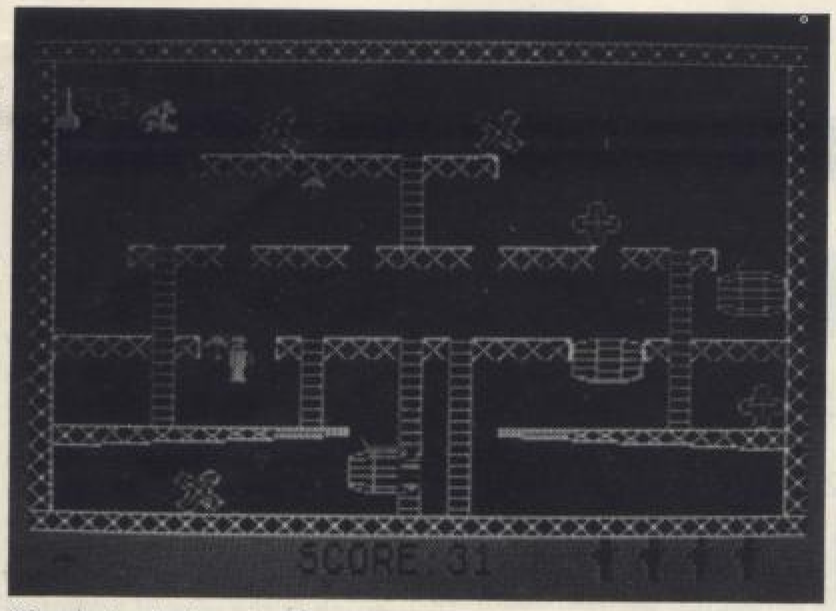
On screens one and two, the layout is pretty straightforward, although there are holes in the girders to be jumped on screen two. Screen three has two sets of stairs to be jumped, screen four has a long jump, screen five has springs which throw the barrels upwards, screen six throws showers of barrels at you, in screen seven the barrels disappear and reappear further up. In the final level you must knock out the 7 weak points in the scaffolding to bring Kong tumbling down.

The barrels are very fast moving and have a wide pattern of travelling down the screen. In addition to the barrels, there are hammers to be collected by jumping up for them, after which you can knock out barrels until the border flashes red. It isn't possible to go up or down a ladder while holding a hammer. There are also umbrellas which protect against a bad fall, should you miss jumping a hole.

CRITICISM

'This is quite a traditional 'Kong' with proper girders and lots of detail. Kong himself even sits st the top and is animated so you can see him throwing out the barrels. The barrels are very big and animated in hollow 3D and you can see them face or end on depending where they are. There's a very mean screen where they actually zig-zag down without using a girder or ladder. Fortunately your man jumps with enormous gusto. Very playable.'

'This is a fairly good reproduction of the original but the graphics are a bit on the jerky side and the anima-



"I'm singing in the rain of barrels, just singing in the rain of barrels . . ."

tion of your man jumping isn't very good. It's reasonable, but for my money not as good as the Blaby or Ocean versions.'

'Usually you can start moving as soon as the game begins, but with *Monkey Bizness* your man doesn't appear (on the first screen) until the first barrel has already rolled down two girders — unfair! There's lots of detail and plenty to keep you on your toes. It may be a bit late in the day to be bringing out a 'Kong' game, but I think this one will prove quite popular anyway as it has enough variation to make it distinct from others, and enough screens to battle through to make it quite addictive in playing. Overall, the graphics are of a fairly high standard too.'

COMMENTS

Control keys: 6/7 = left/right, 8/9 = up & jump/down
Joystick: Sinclair 2
Keyboard play: responsive
Use of colour: good
Graphics: detailed, 3D barrels, a little jerky
Sound: fair to average
Skill levels: 1
Lives: 4
Screens: 8
General rating: above average to good.

Use of computer	57%
Graphics	62%
Playability	65%
Getting started	75%
Addictive qualities	68%
Value for money	63%
Overall	**65%**



Dr Franky & The Monster

Producer: **Virgin Games**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£5.59**
Language: **Machine code**
Author: **Martin Wheeler**

Martin Wheeler is 16 and still at a local comprehensive school. Like so many young Spectrum programmers today, he started off with the ZX81, but found himself unable to get into his school's computer class. Since then he has become so involved with computing that he gave up his hobby of drawing cartoon comics, and the result of such sacrifice is this game. He hopes it will give encouragement to all the kids who are not good at maths and cannot get into computer classes.

Well it may do just that. *Dr Franky & The Monster* is a platform with holes and jumping game that has an original feel to it. On each of the nine screens there is a six-floor dungeon, and the object is to guide Dr Franky from the very bottom up to the top, collect a white conical flask on the way and take it to the Monster who stands lifeless against a wall at the top right. This refreshes the parts that other white conical flasks cannot do, and, incidentally, takes you to the next screen.

The problems come in the form of four ghosts who roam the dungeon and chase Dr Franky all the way. There is also a cart filled with bricks on the top floor which will run him over. The gap, too, on the top floor is a problem because it is quite wide, and Dr Franky can only jump up through the holes, not over them. The magic hammer helps in this case, as it does on other screens. Because of the layout of floors, holes and lifts, there is the usual element of strategy involed in discovering the best route through to the top, and this goes for each screen which has its own seperate layout. To make things worse there is a time limit — and it's quite a severe one.

CRITICISM

'These are some of the meanest ghosts I've yet encountered. They won't let poor Franky take a step without anticipating him. Because he can only jump up the holes and not across, it takes some getting used to — running along a floor, for instance, often means falling down a hole to the next level and instantly leaping up again. The graphics are very good, large, smooth and well drawn; good sound too. Apart from *Spectron*, I think this is Virgin's best ever game.'

'This is a good game from Virgin. The graphics are very good, colourful and well animated (I think the flicker on the ghosts is deliberate) Dr Franky's movement is nice (and simple with only three keys used). The game is fun and fairly addictive. The ghosts look like they escaped from a Pacman game. I like it.'

'Dr Franky is a difficult platform game and quite challenging to play. With each screen being different it means that you get the hang of those you can master, and then instantly lose a life on a new one until you can 'see' the way through. Timing and jumping skill is of the essence. A really good game from Virgin at last — I hope they'll do more like it.'

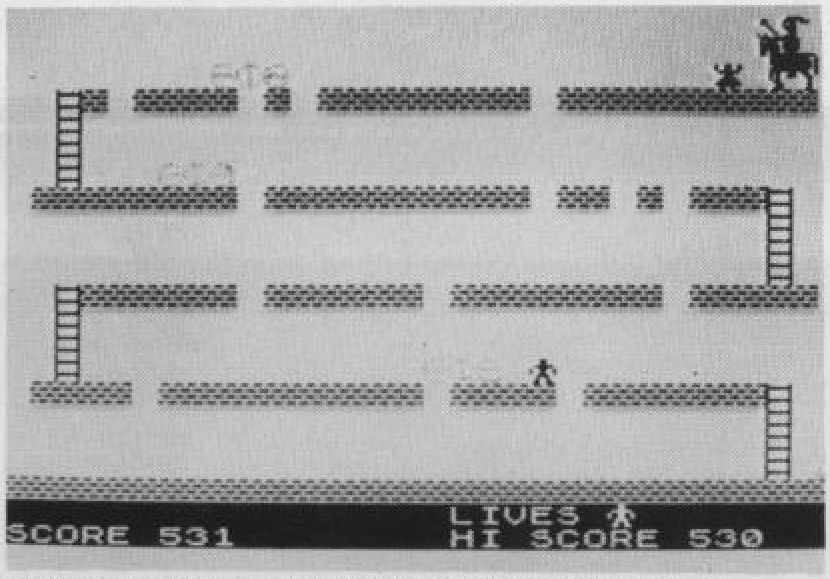
COMMENTS

Control keys: 1/2 = left/right, 0 = jump
Joystick: none, doesn't need it
Keyboard play: responsive, but tricky
Colour: very good and varied
Graphics: very good
Sound: very good
Skill levels: 1
Lives: 3
Screens: 9
General rating: good, fairly addictive.

Use of computer	80%
Graphics	79%
Playability	78%
Getting started	72%
Addictive qualities	75%
Value for money	73%
Overall	**76%**

Dr Franky (in white) brings refreshment to the parts other doctors daren't reach.





Wily old Kong disguises himself as a medieval knight kidnapper.

Killer Knight

Producer: **Phipps Associates**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£5.95**
Language: **Machine code**

Killer Knight sounds adventurish, especially coming from Phipps Associates, who are noted for their adventures, but in fact this is an arcade game, indeed, a thinly disguised 'Donkey Kong'. The scenario has you whipped back in time through some fault in the space/time continuum, hand in hand with your girlfriend. A wicked knight comes up out of the blue, so to speak, and kidnapped your girl, taking her to the top of his castle. You decide to climb up and rescue her while the knight rolls barrels down at you. There are also 3 or 4 holes in each of the four floors which must be jumped. If you fall through your man doubles up in pain and succumbs. A green umbrella sits on the ground floor beyond the first ladder, and this may be used once to help break a fall.

CRITICISM

'It's a pity the instructions are contained in the first part of the load, although the control keys are repeated between any game, as one never seems to remember all the detail. The graphics are very bright and clean. The layout of the first screen is quite simple, the ground and four floors being connected by ladders at either end in a zig-zag formation. Control of your man is nice and simple and he moves very positively, automatically climbing ladders as soon as he touches them. A fast game, and a worthy addition to the Kongs.'

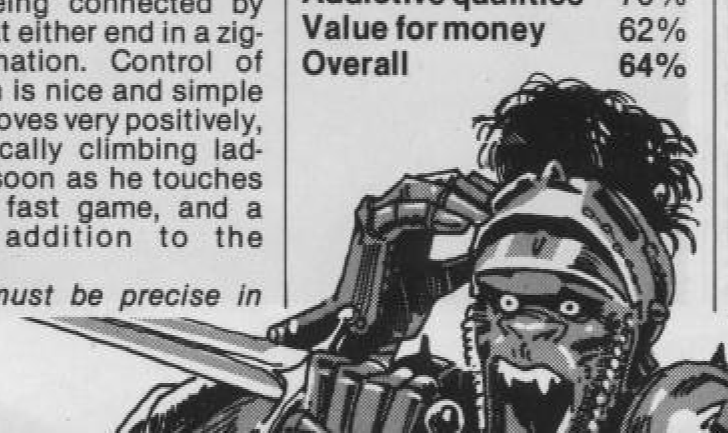
'You must be precise in jumping the barrels, and mastering this takes some time. A nasty programming trick is the automatic climbing of ladders. While this certainly saves a control key, I found that if you still have a walk key pressed when he reaches the top, he falls over the edge of the floor to his death! Getting the umbrella was difficult at first because it's located beyond a ladder, and the man goes up it as soon as he reaches the ladder. The trick was to get one character from the ladder and then jump across its base. I didn't see the second screen. This is a hard game.'

'The graphics are quite good, although rather small, and I liked the continuous sound. This 'Kong' type game is above average, it's very fast and difficult. Its difficulty makes it rather addictive.'

COMMENTS

Control keys: 6/7 jump/walk left, 8/9 walk/jump right
Joystick: Kempston
Keyboard play: very responsive
Colour: average
Graphics: small, but neat and reasonable
Sound: continuous, good
Skill levels: 1
Lives: 4
Screens: 3
General rating: above average, a difficult Kong game.

Use of computer	66%
Graphics	56%
Playability	65%
Getting started	62%
Addictive qualities	70%
Value for money	62%
Overall	**64%**



Chopper X-1

Producer: **R & R Software**
Memory required: **16K**
Retail price: **£5.95**
Language: **Machine code**

Helicopter games seem to have been popular recently. In this new game you are commander of a chopper gunship, and your task is to destroy invading aliens. These come in the form of SPINAD, best described as flapping Y shaped things, SPORE and FUSA. The Spinad have a zig zag formation, moving slowly across the screen from right to left. Your chopper is stationed on the left and only moves up and down. The Fusa burrow into the earth and then fire out Spores. The other hazard is the weather — it's raining that old arcade favourite, meteors which travel diagonally down the screen. Being hit by anything, of course, means a loss of life.

CRITICISM

'The effect of your travelling over a landscape is done by very slowly scrolling the ground beneath the helicopter, but it doesn't really create the sense of flying. Your rocket fire is reasonably potent and there are two smart bombs when all else fails, but in the end there just isn't very much to this game apart from shooting or dodging the aliens on their predictable path. They get through to you not because you may lack the skill, but because like any good Casino, the odds are stacked slightly in favour of the aliens.'

'The graphics and sound are both good and the game is rather challenging as you can only move up and down. But other than shooting aliens, there doesn't seem to be a lot to it. The game is above average; it's an 'okay' game to play but didn't have much in the way of addictive qualities.'

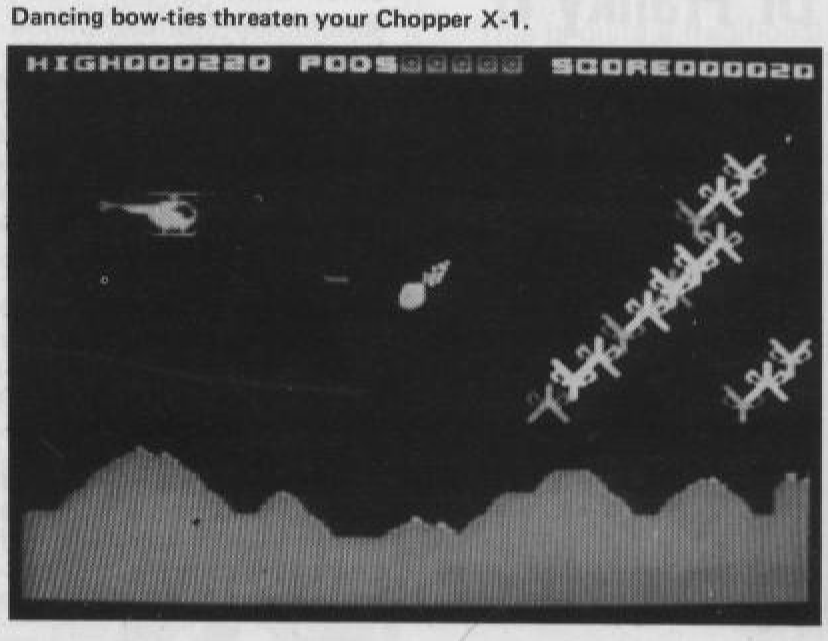
'The first thing that struck me on playing *Chopper X-1* was a sense of disappointment. The cover of the inlay promises a lot, but the game doesn't deliver. All you do is go up and down, dodge meteors and aliens and try to shoot them. Whilst the graphics are reasonably neat and smooth, they aren't all that exciting either. I think I've come to expect more from a Spectrum game, even a 16K one than this offers.'

COMMENTS

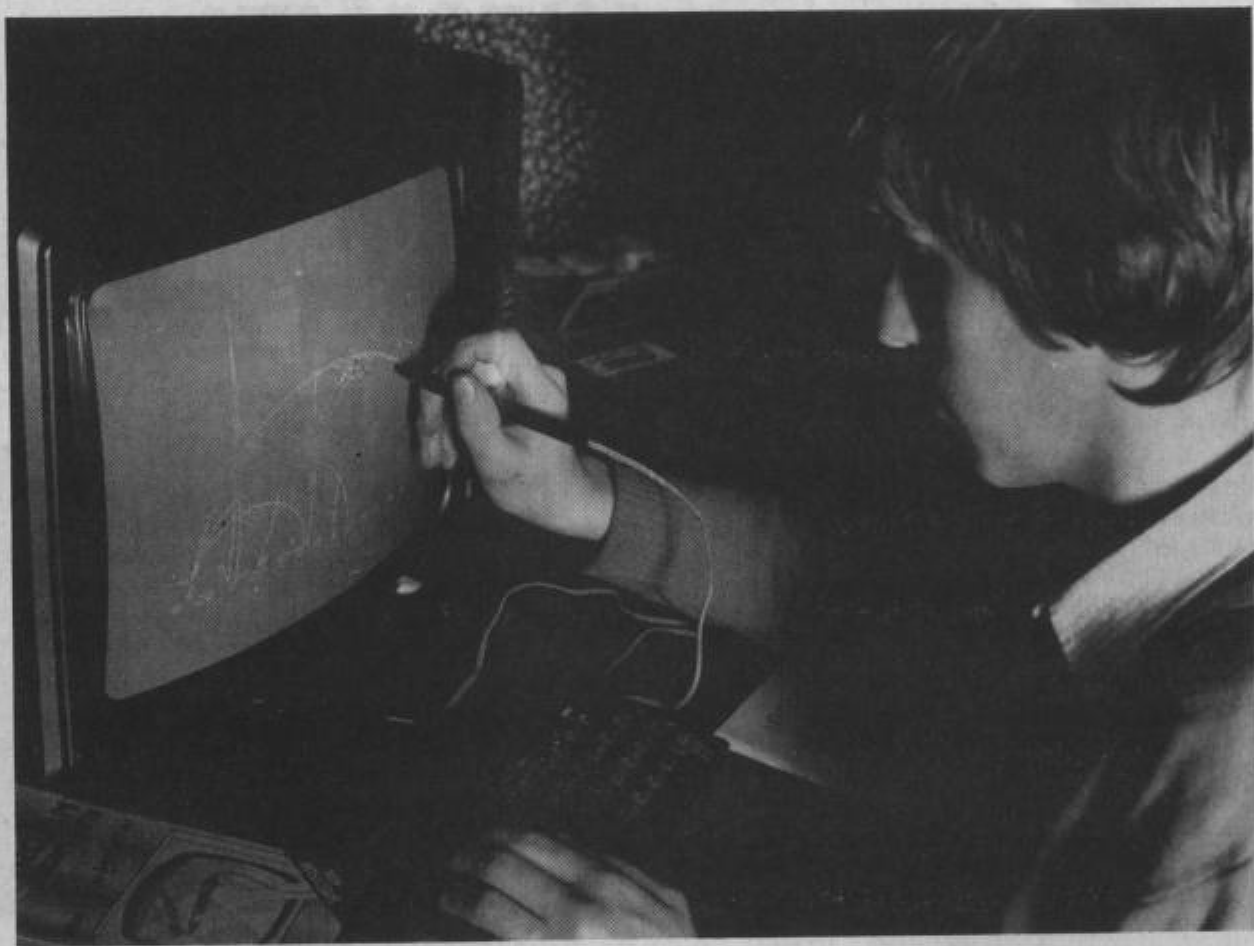
Control keys: 6/7 = down/up 0 = fire, 9 = smart bomb
Joystick: Kempston, Mikrogen, AGF, Protek, cursor clip on
Keyboard play: responsive
Colour: average
Graphics: average, nice and big though
Sound: very good
Skill levels: 1
Lives: 3
General rating: a good idea, but not very exciting to play.

Use of computer	80%
Graphics	56%
Playability	50%
Getting started	75%
Addictive qualities	38%
Value for money	43%
Overall	**57%**

Dancing bow-ties threaten your Chopper X-1.



THE TROJAN (WORK) HORSE



Having reviewed a software oriented drawing program in the last issue of the magazine (*PAINTBOX* from **Print 'n' Plotter**), it seemed irresistible to take a closer look at one of those trendy light pens which supposedly turn your TV screen into a versatile drawing board.

The **Trojan light pen** comes neatly packaged in an ex-VHS plastic cassette box containing the magic wand, which could easily be mistaken for one of those promotional biros (it evens includes address and telephone number) if it weren't for the protruding cable terminating into a battery clip connector and plug, a 9V PP3 battery, the utility program cassette and the instruction leaflet. The program is loaded in the usual way and prompts you after autorunning. The cassette recorder plug (EAR) is removed from the Spectrum and swapped with the light pen plug. The battery connector is clipped onto the PP3 battery. The fun may begin.

The light pen provides two independent functions. Its first use is as a fast menu pointer, enabling the computer operator to make a selection of available options just by pointing the pen at the specified line position on the TV screen. The program explains in detail how to incorporate this facility into your own programs. Required is a 200 byte long machine code routine which has to be copied and saved. This routine is accessed by two basic programs: One required for the calibration of the light pen to the individual TV set and the menu selection program, which returns the line number in form of a variable PL. The selection works every time and is realiable and fast. Only criticism is the fact that the machine code routine seems to be not relocatable and must therefore be saved in memory location 59400:

SAVE"mc" CODE 59400,200

Its second use is as a high resolution drawing pen. After selecting HIRES DRAW you are confronted with a simple pen alignment routine which gives way to a menu line display. To select a function you just lign up the pen with the letter or the blank space on the right hand side and press key 1. A white cursor will travel to the point slected and the option is selected.

The menu line incorporates the following functions:

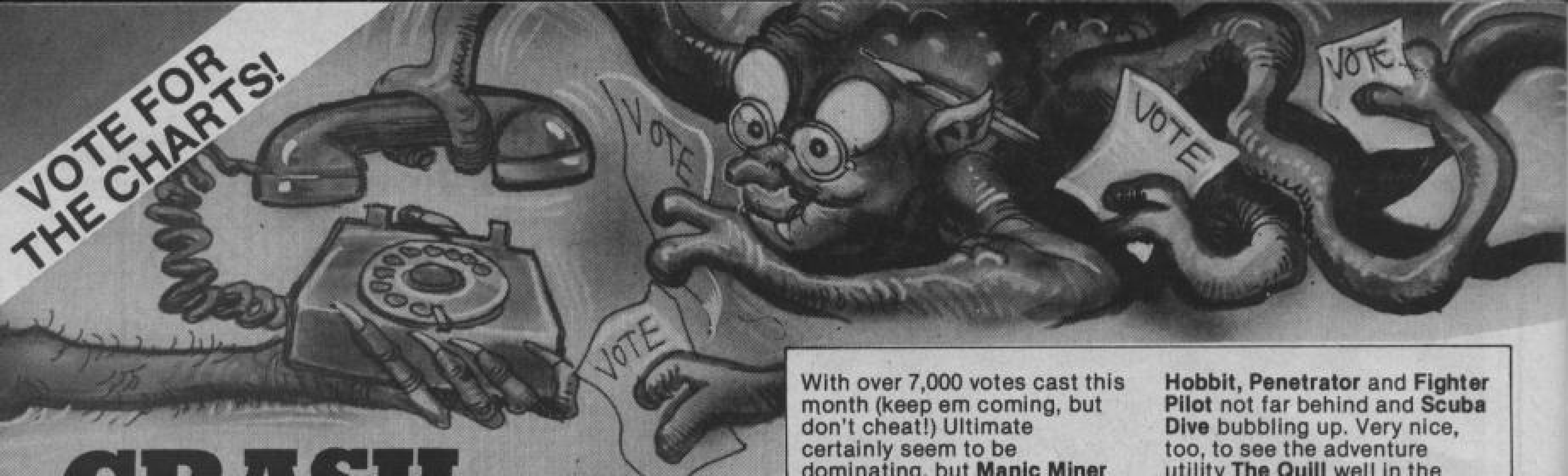
M Move the main cursor. Once selected the program prompts you to position the pen in the desired position and to press 1.
S Secondary cursor for line, box and circle routines.
B Box with M and S as opposing corners.
CO Copy screen to printer.
C Circle with centre point M and radius ABS (M-S).
D Draw. After selection position pen at desired starting point and press 1. A flashing cursor controls your writing speed: Do not move pen outside flashing cursor area or the line draw facility will not be able to follow the pen movement.
CR Print characters with M as starting point.
E Erase last action.
F Fill area designated by M. Upon selection a colour menu will appear on the screen.
I Ink colour selection.
L Draws line from M to S.
N New clears the screen to the current paper colour.
P Paper colour selection.
T Saving or loading screen content.

The light pen performed satisfactorily with all functions, but it was found to be very sensitive to the light conditions: The TV brightness had to be adjusted for optimum results and the TV set not exposed to any glaring sunlight. The draw facility suffers from its usual setback with light pens of not being able to locate the writing position accurately enough for high resolution drawings and the drawing of straight lines in this mode requires a lot of practice and skill. Paper colour selection allows for instant colour switching, but also creates the usual confounding problem caused by the character mapped attribute resolution. Ink and paper colour will clash if not worked out within the confines of the attribute boundaries. The colour fill facility displayed the usual speed, but appeared never to crash even if the area to be filled wasn't 'airtight': the routine would escape from the leak and fill the entire surrounding area and give a triumphant bleep of approval upon completion much to the dismay of the screen designer. Using erase however clears up this mess and gives you a second chance.

Obviously the light pen has its limitations for freehand drawing due to the inaccuracy of positioning the pen on a pixel level, but then no one should expect to be able to draw to such a high resolution on the curved TV screen at an uncomfortable angle and with possible alignment errors. It is left to the individual to accept this limitation or to forfeit the freehand drawing for a cursor controlled drawing routine. Certainly the menu selection facility is very elegant and can obviously be incorporated into one's own programs.

For the ultimate professional screen creations it is still necessary to revert to the primitive paper grid pad design where the original artwork has to be simplified and coaxed into the confines of the pixel and attributes grid of the Spectrum and input via binary or decimal code direct into the screen memory area. The light pen certainly is a lot more fun to handle and should at least convert your TV screen into an amusing and versatile sketchpad.

Franco Frey



CRASH HOTLINE

With over 7,000 votes cast this month (keep em coming, but don't cheat!) Ultimate certainly seem to be dominating, but **Manic Miner** is again the clear winner. Among the older games **Hobbit, Penetrator** and **Fighter Pilot** not far behind and **Scuba Dive** bubbling up. Very nice, too, to see the adventure utility **The Quill** well in the running.

MORE & BIGGER HOTLINE PRIZES!!!

Whether you phone in or write in, all names and addresses go into the bag to be drawn monthly. First out will receive £40 worth of software of your choice plus a CRASH tee shirt; and five runners up will each receive three issues of CRASH free plus a CRASH tee shirt.

YOUR VOTE IS EXTREMELY IMPORTANT — USE IT PLEASE!

HOW TO USE THE CRASH HOTLINE

Method 1
CRASH HOTLINE PHONE-IN. Ring the number below. We have had to install an answering machine. After the recorded message state your name and address very clearly, spelling it out if necessary (if it's an unusual name!) and then state the five games, with producers' names, starting with number 1 down to number 5. Please do this as quickly as possible.

THE CRASH HOTLINE PHONE NUMBER IS 0584 (Ludlow) 3015

Method 2
CRASH HOTLINE WRITE-IN. Use the coupon below, making sure you fill in all the details very clearly. Pop the coupon in a stamped envelope and send it to us at the address on the coupon.

DEADLINE
Votes for the next issue must be received no later than Wednesday 29th. February. Votes received after that date will go forward to next month's issue.

If you use the phone-in Hotline, you may have to bear with us — it's already proving very popular, which means you may well find it engaged when you ring. Try again later, and if all fails use the write-in coupon for safety.

CRASH HOTLINE SPECTRUM SOFTWARE CHART — APRIL

Figures in brackets indicate last month's position

1	(1)	**MANIC MINER** Software Projects
2	(2)	**ATIC ATAC** Ultimate
3	(3)	**LUNAR JETMAN** Ultimate
4	(5)	**JETPAC** Ultimate
5	(4)	**3D ANT ATTACK** Quicksilva
6	(7)	**HOBBIT** Melbourne House
7	(9)	**HUNCHBACK** Ocean
8	(11)	**DEATHCHASE** Micromega
9	(6)	**ZOOM** Imagine
10	(10)	**VALHALLA** Legend
11	(8)	**CHEQUERED FLAG** Psion
12	(12)	**PENETRATOR** Melbourne House
13	(36)	**PYRAMID** Fantasy
14	(26)	**FOOTBALL MANAGER** Addictive
15	(15)	**BUGABOO** Quicksilva
16	(34)	**CHUCKIE EGG** A&F
17	(27)	**TRANZ-AM** Ultimate
18	(--)	**WHEELIE** Microsphere
19	(--)	**ALCHEMIST** Imagine
20	(--)	**MR WIMPY** Ocean
21	(25)	**HALL OF THE THINGS** Crystal
22	(14)	**SCRABBLE** Psion
23	(42)	**PSSST** Ultimate
24	(35)	**STONKERS** Imagine
25	(29)	**FLIGHT SIMULATION** Psion
26	(17)	**MAZIACS** DK Tronics
27	(--)	**KONG** Ocean
28	(--)	**DOOMSDAY CASTLE** Fantasy
29	(13)	**ARCADIA** Imagine
30	(20)	**TIMEGATE** Quicksilva
31	(31)	**SPLAT** Incentive
32	(--)	**FIGHTER PILOT** Digital Integration
33	(44)	**POOL** C.D.S.
34	(21)	**PHEENIX** Megadodo
35	(--)	**COOKIE** Ultimate
36	(--)	**SCUBA DIVE** Durrell
37	(18)	**JUMPING JACK** Imagine
38	(23)	**GALAXIANS** Artic
39	(33)	**HARRIER ATTACK** Durrell
40	(50)	**ANDROID 2** Vortex
41	(--)	**KILLER KONG** Blaby
42	(--)	**AH DIDDUMS** Imagine
43	(--)	**THE QUILL** Gilsoft
44	(28)	**ZIP ZAP** Imagine
45	(--)	**TRANSVERSION** Ocean
46	(--)	**TUTANKHAMUN** Micromania
47	(37)	**PUSH OFF** Software Projects
48	(39)	**TEST MATCH** C.R.L.
49	(--)	**CYRUS IS CHESS** Intelligent
50	(--)	**KNOT IN 3D** New Generation

HOTLINE winner this month was Tim Radnor, Barson under Needwood, Staffs. The three runners up were: Karl McGhee, Yate, Bristol; Kim Speicher, Brentwood, Essex, and Johnathon Hale, Great Barr, Birmingham.

CRASH HOTLINE WRITE IN COUPON

Please use block capitals and write clearly!

Name ....

Address ....

....

Postcode ....

Send your coupon to: **CRASH HOTLINE, PO BOX 10, LUDLOW, SHROPSHIRE SY8 1DB**

My top five favourite programs in descending order are:

TITLE	PRODUCER
1	
2	
3	
4	
5	

FORMAT 4 KIT SP/1

Orion Software



For Spectrum owners who like to do a little more with their computers than play games, **Orion Software's** *Format 4* graphics planning system may well prove invaluable, and you get an amazing amount of material in the kit for your money too. The kit was first launched in the *Your Computer* Christmas Fair held at Wembley and apparently received a very good response, the only critic being games writer Jon Ritman of Artic Computing, who complained that the trace screen was no good to a professsional because it lacked the full 24 lines available to machine language. Orion have put this right, and the current kits are now equipped with PROTRACE reusable trace screens catering for all BASIC and machine code input.

The kit comes presented in a custom-built A4 size plastic folder. In the ring binder section there are 80 sheets of 100gsm indexed hard copy plans, comprised of:

20 detailed UDG plans with decimal notations, arranged in 6 groups of 4, plus 15 small rough planners per sheet. Each group of four character blocks is divided up into the 8 x 8 pixels. There are 20 full screen PLOT DRAW and CIRCLE plans, printed to the same size as the trace screen, and block grided for use with the scaled pixel.

20 quarter screen plans for larger scale graphics and routines assembly.

And 20 general screen PRINT plans featuring a grid pattern identical to TELEPLAN, an optional extra which gives better visual reference to the actual TV screen.

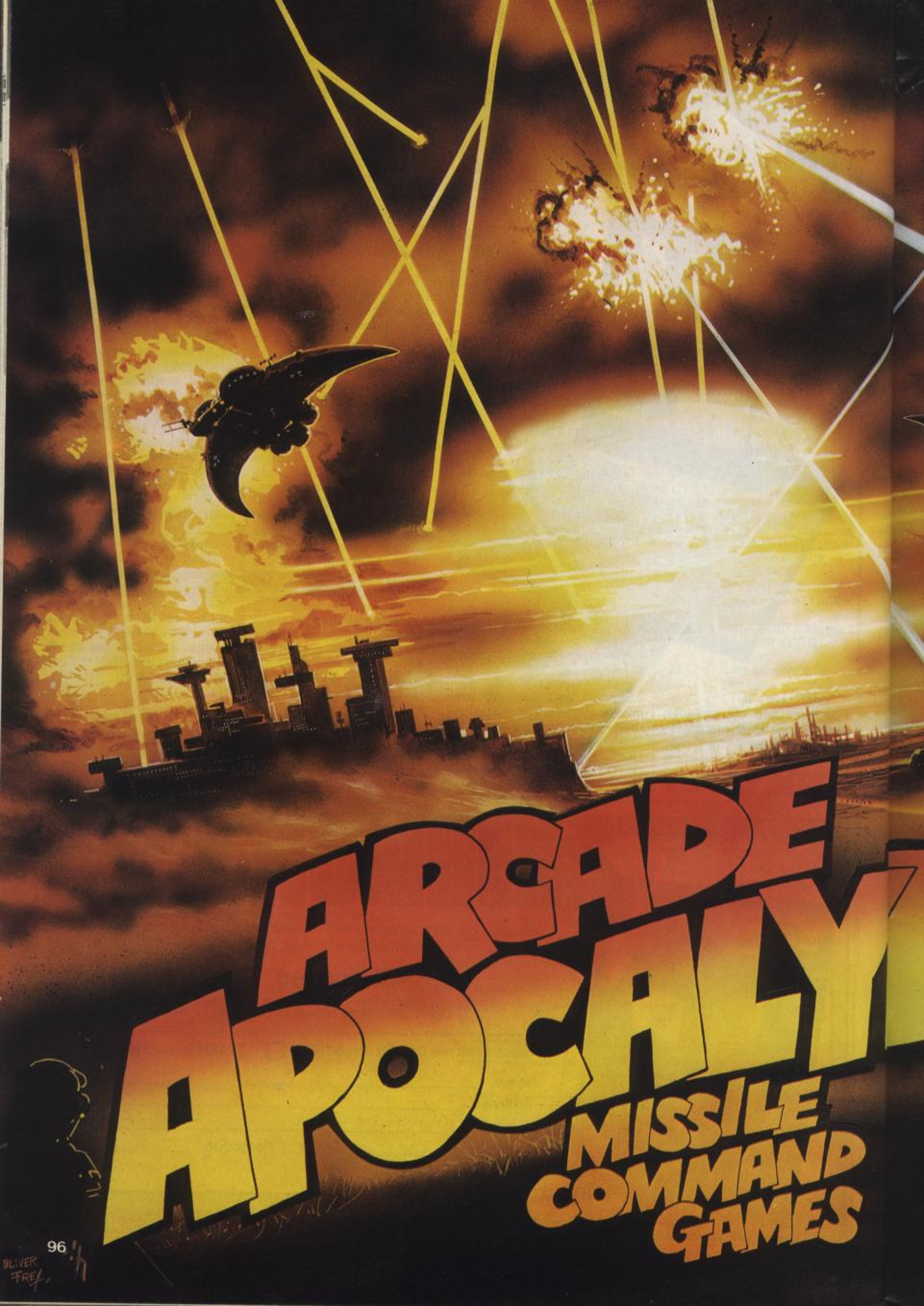
In addition to the plans there is a translucent trace screen and scale matched pixel rule, matt drawing/backing board of plastic, and a Staedtler fine point pen, the ink of which may be removed with damp tissue. Finally there is one clear plastic storage sleeve.

Microdraw has been devised by **Micromania,** who have also used this kit to help design graphics for *Pengy* and *Tutankhamun*. *Microdraw* is a menu-driven utility which allows for block and hi-res drawings with very easy access to erase, skip and jump facilities, alterations of BORDER, INK and PAPER colours, printing characters and storing work in the short term or SAVEing completed work.

Used in conjunction with the *Format 4* kit plans, it all adds up to an extremely useful graphics designers utility, at what is a very reasonable price.

Format 4 Kit/SP1 (as above with blank cassette) £16.95
Kit supplied with *MICRODRAW* £21.50
Protrace Kit/SP2 £3.75
MICRODRAW cassette £6.50

Orion Software Products are at Pippbrook Mill, London Road, Dorking, Surrey. 0306 884046


ARCADE
APOCALY
MISSILE
COMMAND
GAMES
OLIVER
FREY



PSE!

Our erstwhile arcade sleuths, CHRIS PASSEY & MATTHEW UFFINDELL dust off their track balls and compare some Spectrum 'Missile Command' type games.

'Missile Command' is the arcade classic in which the player defends six cities from enemy missiles. These missiles leave traces on the screen, splitting up at lower levels to make life more difficult. In addition planes and killer satellites move across the screen dropping more missiles. Heat sensitive missiles (or smart bombs) are able to avoid your defensive explosions and have to be hit accurately (direct hit) or deluged with explosions. Defence is by means of three missile bases, each having ten missiles. Any missile you launch will head for, and detonate at the point where your cross wire sight is set. The game continues until all your cities have been destroyed. The control of the sight is achieved by means of a track ball, which gives a very positive, accurate movement (analogue) and is very necessary for this type of game. The Spectrum games, of course, do not have a track ball provision.

Armageddon by Silversoft

This is quite an accurate copy of the original in layout, and has the six cities and three laser bases. Each base has its own fire button. Although the keys are fairly well laid out, individual base firing is rather difficult with a total of 7 keys. Because of this, I welcomed the computer-aided firing option which allows you to fire from the nearest base with one key press. This has a slight bias to the outer bases to avoid draining the centre one. The Kempston option greatly improves playability. Graphics are quite good and colourful but not very smooth. The explosions are quite different from the original, being clouds of smoke. Good sound with a nice frying noise adding to the feel. There are planes and satellites, also smart weapons (move straight down). These latter are a little jerky due to character position movement. Overall, a reasonable game.

CP

This has a two-part load — you input whether you want to use a Kempston joystick. The first thing you notice about this version is its sound, very good effects. The cross hair movement is block and not smooth — not actually a disvantage as the explosions are realistically long lasting. This version has several features which the Softek one doesn't like alien craft and satellites and intelligent missiles which hover over your explosions until it's safe. Also three missile silos and a useful auto-fire select. A game that is a good copy of the arcade original and I think is the second best version for keyboard use.

MU

ARMAGEDDON by Ocean

This is a variation on the theme, basically the same in essence but a few points have changed. There are still six cities but no missile or laser bases. Your defence missiles 'appear' from the centre of the screen, leaving no trace behind them. They take off at angles, altering their flight path to reach their destination (detonation!) point. They appear to be fired in groups of two with a slight pause between groups. Explosions caused by the missiles are nice, big, smooth balloon types, very similar to the original. Incoming missiles, which split at lower levels, do leave a trace. Due to the wrap around screen, any going off one side will reappear from the other. I liked this added touch. The graphics are smooth (pixel movement). There is also a spy satellite, but no aircraft or smart bombs. The colour at one point spoils the game by altering whole character squares when explosions occur (only on the light blue screen). Generally control is quite easy but the Kempston option is obviously far better. Although 5 skill levels are provided the game is not really challenging enough (perhaps because it is easier to control than most of the others). This is the best of the two Armageddons, and fairly good overall.

CP

Armageddon by Ocean is Kempston compatible although you don't really need a joystick because of the good keyboard layout and fairly easy game. The cross wire sight is moved in a very controllable amnner. You are allowed 32 plasma boltsa to defend yourself, which produce a fairly rounded explosion, not too bad at all. Every so often an odd looking space ship passes overhead and fires bombs at you. The sound is good but the colour is only average used. Not such a demanding game, so it's value is lessened.

MU

Missile Defence by Anirog

This had by far the best explosions, they are extremely similar to the original — perhaps even better! The firing is rapid, so you can put up an excellent barrage to deal with the attacks. Planes drop bombs and there are smart weapons to contend with as well. The colours are generally good but on one level things are a little difficult to see due to the colour choice (also happens on the the arcade original)! Another small point is that the sight can sometimes disappear when moved quickly. This version is really fast and will be enjoyed by players of the arcade version. But the game has one major fault — key layout. The control keys are the cursors, which are bad at the best of times. Fortunately Kempston owners are catered for. Ironically, under keyboard play it is probably the worst of the bunch, whereas with a joystick it is the best. I noted that after about 6



levels a garbled mess of large print appeared at the top of the screen but it didn't affect the game.

CP

Anirog have produced an excellent reproduction of the original in every way. There are 7 keys to control, four for direction and three for movement, which means you must possess a weird type of hand — or better still, a Kempston joystick. All the keys act instantly though. This is the only version which has sound effects when your missile takes off, ending up with a really impressive explosion (sound too). Detailed fighter craft fly overhead releasing even more missiles. Good colours and graphics, I would pay 10p a game to play this one in the arcades. The best of the Bunch.

MU

Earth Defence by Artic

This another game which falls down on the keyboard layout — all along the top row. The game itself has fairly simple graphics, the explosions being reasonable, but inferior to those of Anirog or Ocean. It is reasonable as a game, but due to keys, only a joystick game really (Kempston and Sinclair). Three skill levels and a 2 player option are also provided.

CP

With this version one or two players can play, with a choice of 3 skill levels. There are 36 missiles for your defence in this comparatively tame version. Every 1,000 points scored awards you an extra city. The cross hair moves quickly and smoothly, and firing a missile results in a realistic explosion with good sound too. I like the colour, and it is a good noisy version, but its addictive qualities are slight, and its appeal wears off after a couple of hours.

MU

Cruise Attack by Mikrogen

Here we have a game with quite a good key layout. The game is a little different to the original, having only two outer base, each with individual firing. Graphically, things are average and the defending explosions are rather short in duration. A barrage of fire is impossible. Enemy missiles hitting your cities cause a nice little atomic clouds. Only smart bombs have been included from the original. The game is 'alright' but not particularly exciting. There are no joystick options — the keys are akay (they're supposed to be user-definable, but they're not).

CP

Although Mikrogen say this is a version of 'Missile Command' it isn't a close copy at all, with only two independently firing bases. There are the six cities, but no alien craft. The colour and graphics are above average and the sight movement keys are well placed, not quite so good for the firing keys though. The explosions look good and realistic but the cross hair moves quite slowly which makes it difficult to defend properly.

MU

Electro Storm by P.S.S.

Although essentially a 'Missile Command' game, this one is rather altered. You defend six cities with a central laser tower, armed with 30 laser bolts. The attacking missiles are stopped, not destroyed, by hitting them on the tip. This is no easy task, considering that the explosions are instantaneous flashes. Pin point accuracy is required when compared to other versions. The key layout is probably as good as possible, but it still does not give enough control to achieve such accuracy. The graphics are fairly simple but reasonably smooth (not the explosions though). The sound is one of the game's better points. Being a bit different, it makes a change, but keyboard is out here too. Kempston option.

CP

This is the only version to have several keys doing the same function, eg. Q to T is 'up'. Even so, I found the key positions to be badly laid out. Sound plays an important role in this game. Alien missiles tend to change direction quite often, making life even more difficult and the explosions are ultra-short. For some reason the screen area for play seems to be very limited, I don't know why — perhaps it is just crowded. Keyboard response is good as is the cross wire movement. Once all the cities have been destroyed, a great flashing explosion takes place. A fair to poor copy of the arcade version, and I thought, the worst of the bunch.

MU

Repulsar by Softek

This game is very similar to *Electro Storm* in several ways. It has the central firing base armed with 30 missiles; also the explosions are very short, almost flashes. The graphics are generally okay but colour is poor and stays the same throughout the game (in the original each sheet has a different colour). The missile traces don't split up, and they all tend to descend vertically. The game does contain missile-dropping planes and satellites, which move about very rapidly. The cross wire movement is jerky, especially under Kempston control. Control key play is poor, especially with the accuracy required, so the joystick version is better. This version is unexciting.

CP

This is one of the older Spectrum versions. The inlay states all the control keys with the exception of 'fire', which is nowhere to be found. The cross hairs can be easily positioned with the responsive, well laid out keys. The game itself doesn't really speed up as it progresses — just more and more missiles fired at you. Every now and then an alien flies over, dropping more bombs on you. Explosions are short-lived — just a flas of white and it's gone! A fair copy with sound and colour quite well used, but nothing to write home about.

MU

Note on ratings:
To be enjoyed to the full, 'Missile Command' games should be played with a joystick (shame there is not a track ball) because keyboard play, in general, cannot give the same degree of accuracy and control. Although the same may be said for many other types of game, we are sure 'Missile Command' fans will agree that this is the game which needs it the most badly. Therefore the ratings given below have been split in two, one for keyboard only play, and one for joystick play. The two reviewers figures have been averaged as, in general, they turned out to be in agreement.

MISSILE COMMAND COMPARISON TABLE

Ratings are given on a scale between zero and 100 points, and do not reflect what a game may receive in a regular review

K = keyboard J = joystick	USE OF COMPUTER K	USE OF COMPUTER J	GRAPHICS	PLAYABILITY K	PLAYABILITY J	ADDICTIVE QUALITIES K	ADDICTIVE QUALITIES J	VALUE FOR MONEY K	VALUE FOR MONEY J	MEMORY	RETAIL PRICE
ARMAGEDDON (Silv)	38	65	60	40	70	40	70	45	70	16	5.95
ARMAGEDDON (Ocean)	65	90	95	50	85	55	88	60	85	16	5.90
MISSILE DEFENCE (An)	20	95	99	25	95	37	95	30	96	16	5.95
EARTH DEFENCE (Art)	10	65	40	15	60	10	47	25	60	16	4.95
CRUISE ATTACK (Mik)	50		50	35		25		45		48	5.95
ELECTRO STORM (PSS)	5	55	34	7	47	4	50	12	43	48	5.95
REPULSAR (Stek)	15	57	48	10	37	8	27	14	45	16	5.95

CRASH MICRO GAMES ACTION

Vortex SOFTWARE

Competition

To be won! 100 COPIES of "ANDROID 2"



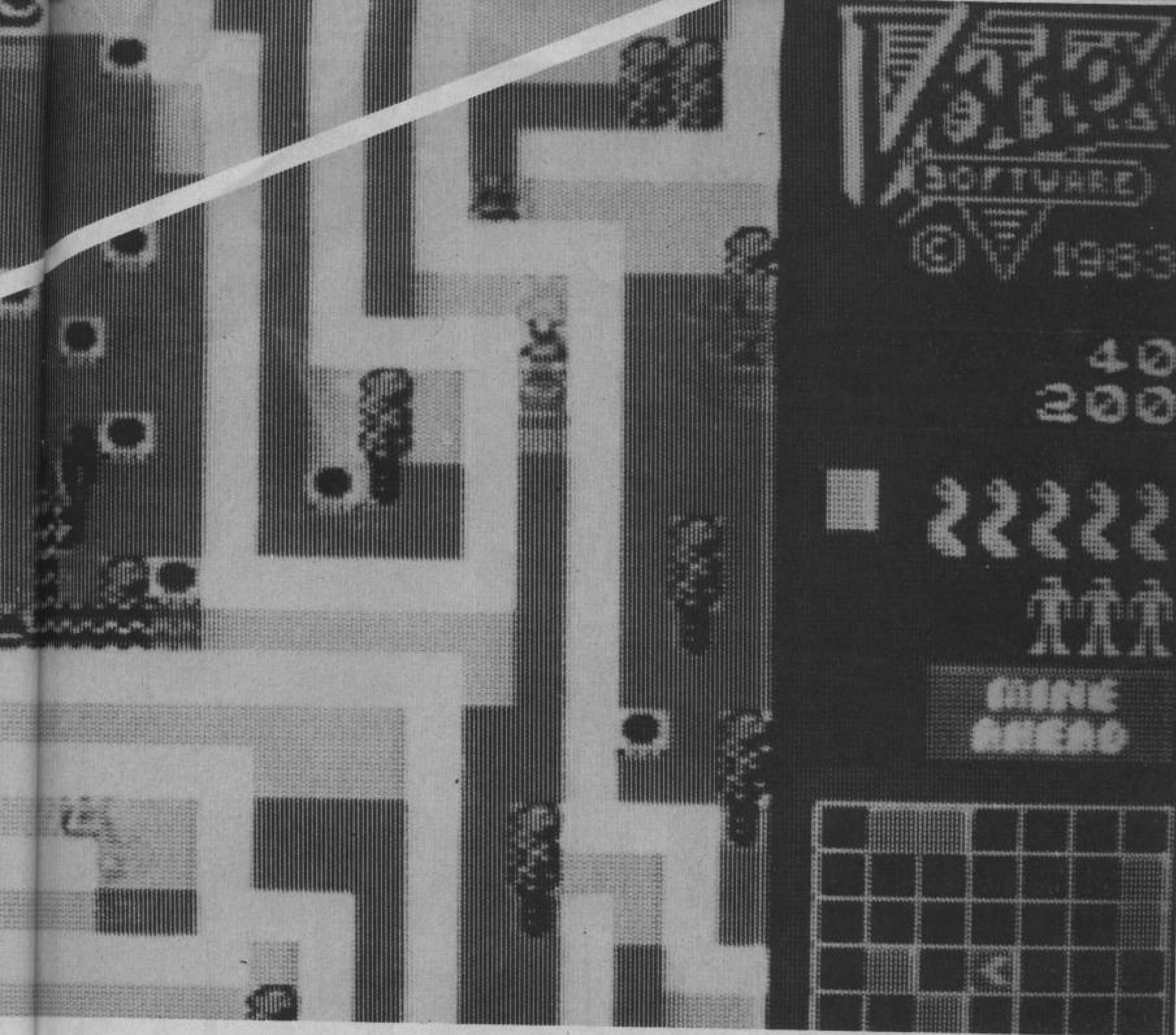


Don't miss out on this exciting competition! 100 games players can earn themselves the chance to be a-mazed by ANDROID 2, a CRASH GAME OF THE MONTH !!!

Early in 1983 the Manchester-based company **VORTEX SOFTWARE** hit the charts with a robot/maze shoot em up game called *ANDROID 1.* After a lot of hard zapping work, the Android has been updated by an even more superior robot — *ANDROID 2.* The new 48K game made it straight into the **CRASH Game of the Month** slot for its fantastic 3D graphics as well as for its high-action playability. Now, in association with CRASH, Vortex Software are offering readers the chance to win an *Android 2.* 100 copies will go to the first 100 correct entries drawn from the bag in answer to the questions below.

Vortex Software began life in late 82 and formed around the nucleus of three young men who had already been writing games software for other companies. They were two brothers, **Costa** and **Crete Panayi**, and **Luke Andrews.** Luke, acting as spokesman for Vortex, says that it just seemed natural to progress to running their own business from having been software writers. The results were some programs for the ZX81, and *Gunlaw* and *Android 1* for the Spectrum.

Android 1 enjoyed a lot of success, but *Android 2* is a far more sophisticated game, both graphically and in the playing. Vortex



have licensed another Manchester software company, **Ocean**, to produce *Android 2* for the Commodore 64, and the version should be ready soon. Meanwhile the team is at work on another action-packed arcade game, which is mysteriously shrouded under the code name of **TLL.** Luke says they may well keep that as the game's actual name. It will be for the 48K Spectrum and should be ready in another three to four weeks.

Our last competition along these lines resulted in a large number of entries, but remember – it's the first 100 correct entries drawn from the bag that win, so **everyone has a chance.** All you have to do is answer the eight questions below and send your answers (on a postcard or the outside of a sealed envelope for preference) to reach us by the last post Tuesday the 24th of April. The draw will be made at the **CRASH MICRO** stand at the **11th ZX Microfair at Alexandra Palace** in London on Saturday the 28th April. All winners will be notified immediately afterwards. Please remember to put your own name and address on the entry!

CRASH/VORTEX COMPETITION

To the Android cult, these questions will be very easy, but for those who are about to enrol, seek out a copy of CRASH issue 2 (March 1984) for help.

1 Name the author of the Android series.
2 What was the Overall percentage given in issue 2 for *Android 2?*
3 How many times must a Millitoid be shot before it is destroyed?
4 Android 2 is equipped with a, "head mounted __________," what?
5 Vortex Software describe *Android 2* as a, "______ action game". What *sort* of action game?
6 What control key must be pressed to move the Android in a downward direction?
7 How many times does the phrase "Android 2" appear on page 13?
8 Name the three zones through which Android 2 must fight his way.

Name, address and answers on a postcard please to:

Crash/Vortex Competition, PO Box 10, Ludlow, Shropshire SY8 1DB

To be received by 24 April latest.



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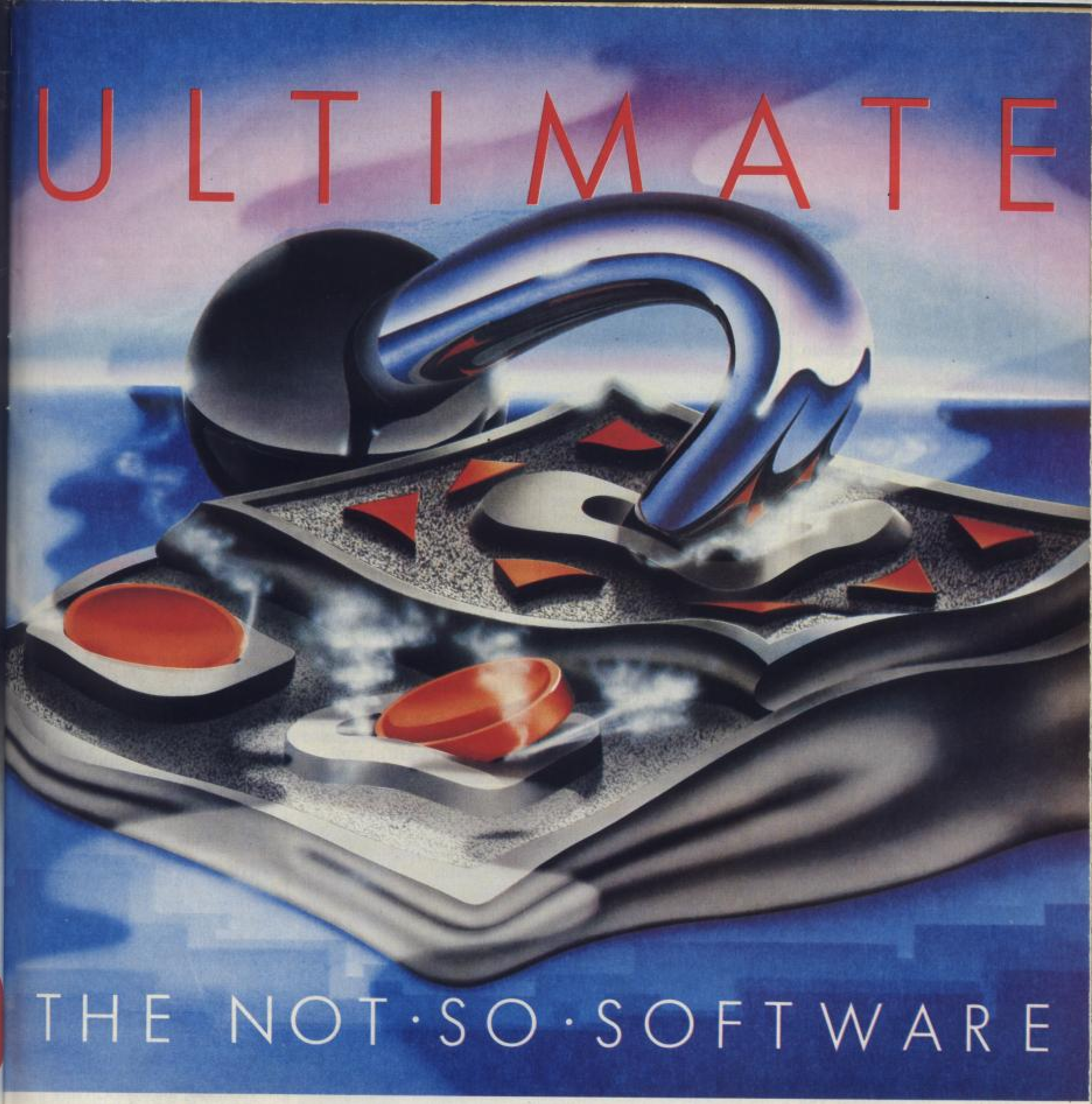
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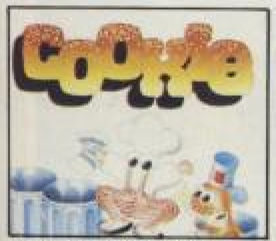
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Cyber Zone

Producer: **Crystal Computing**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£6.50**
Language: **Machine code**

With bright colours, fast, detailed graphics and a thoroughly single-minded idea, **Crystal** have launched an arcade classic with their *Cyber Zone.* It is a shoot em up which is as original in flavour in his flying saucer which revolves at the top of the screen On its underside is a powerful laser cannon which fires a beam downwards at you. His other weapons include highly manoeverable aircraft that dive bomb with frightening accuracy, and a red spinning-top shaped object that he lowers occasionally. This has the effect of 'jamming' your fire power.

The object is to survive long enough with all this going on to wear away the floor of the Cyber Man's saucer, and then hit him in his only vulnerable spot — his left foot!

The program has a special feature which allows players to fire the laser with the sound of their own voice instead of using the keyboard, although at the pace of this game it might be a hazard to health through loss of voice!

CRITICISM

'The graphics are very good, and the sound, which they claim is of arcade standard, is — it's excellent. The game is very fast to play, fun and addictive. It really does bring the arcade into your home. Plenty of action, I really enjoyed it!'

'This isn't just a shoot em up, although skill and dexterity are required, but there's a definite element of strategy involved. When the Cyber Man lowers one of his wretched fire jammers, the easiest way of getting rid of it (as it's invulnerable to your fire once down) is to sit just under it and wait for one of the planes to bomb you, then get the hell out and leave the thing to blow up. Another way is to lure it (it follows you around) into a place where you have just shot down a bomber and let the bomber fall onto it. If you're really



The plane swoops in for a bombing run, low over the jamming device just lowered by tractor beam from above. You're the one in purple.

clever (and lucky) you can get the Cyber Man's laser to blast bomber and jammer at the same time, but getting out from under the beam intended for you is a matter of split second timing. The graphics are superb — the effect of the saucer spinning round is very effective. The graphics, considering they are extremely fast moving, are absolutely flicker free, excellent pixel movement. Marvellous explosions too with great sound effects, and I'm sure that in the split second before his craft blows up, the Cyber Man's head explodes first. This is a dangerously addictive game which I shall be going back to again and again.'

'This is undoubtedly the best arcade shoot em up this month for me and indeed for some time. Utterly addictive, with great sound and marvellous, colourful graphics. There's no doubt — if you like shoot em ups — go out and buy it!'

COMMENTS

Control keys: CAPS/Z = left/right, SPACE to start firing — it's continuous on auto from then on. In addition, 1 = sound on, 2 = sound off
Joystick: none — doesn't need it
Keyboard play: exceptionally responsive and fast
Use of colour: very good
Graphics: excellent
Sound: excellent
Skill levels: 5
Lives: 8
Features: voice activation (not guaranteed)
General rating: a top class, arcade quality and highly addictive game. Excellent value.

Use of computer	**85%**
Graphics	**91%**
Playability	**91%**
Getting started	**71%**
Addictive qualities	**90%**
Value for money	**80%**
Overall	**85%**

Bear Bovver

Producer: **Artic**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£5.95**
Language: **Machine code**
Author: **J. Ritman**

If you've seen those ads with a cheery bear hanging off a ladder with a T on his shirt, you may have wandered what it was all about. Well it turns out to be Artic's latest game, possibly their best yet. Ted is thrilled — he's just taken delivery of a new Sinclair electric vehicle. Unfortunately the batteries don't last very long. The car stops beside a building site, where there are three large, shiny batteries for the taking. Unfortunately there are also three nasty Bovver Bears roving the ladders and platforms as well as a green dinosaur (scenarios get odder and odder, don't they)?

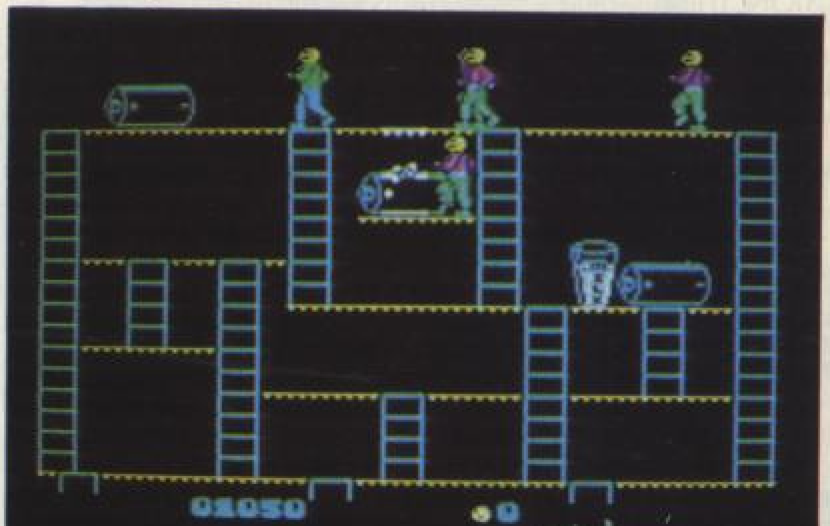
The object of the game is to get Ted out of his car, up the scaffolding and knock the batteries down on at a time and into the car. A battery descends one platform when Ted walks through it, killing off a bovver bear if one should be underneath at the time. It's only a temporary setback however — they soon reappear. Once a battery is in the car. Ted can get in again and drive forward to collect the next battery. To help him on the scaffolding there are some time bombs which can leave behind to blow up a bovver bear (temporary again, sigh). Clearing the screen results in a different layout and four bears. On each screen drink appears in the form of milk, beer and other beverages — it's thirsty work. Oh — and of course, it's worth avoiding bears or dinosaur — they kill.

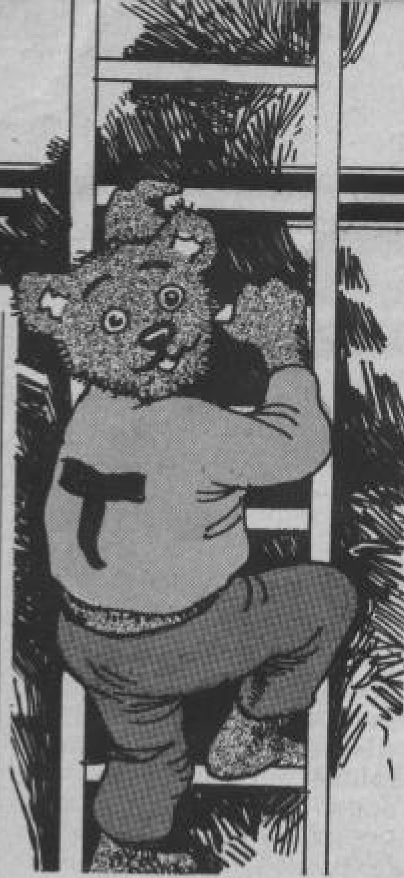
CRITICISM

'This game is very enjoyable and addictive. Artic say the graphics are of 'cartoon quality' — a statement which turns out to be fairly true! The animation of the bears is incredible, and the sound is very good with well known tunes played at any of 4 presettable volumes. Excellent.'

'At times, the bears in this game can be utterly infuriating, ganging up on you

Ted's battery car runs into some bovver.





so you can bearly get out of the car. The detail and movement of the bears is amazingly well done. Other details appeal too, like the explosions when you squash a bear under a battery, or blow one up with a time bomb. Even the transmission drive shaft on the car revolves. As each screen gets cleared there are more bears — on the third a white robot-like creature resembling Twiggy from Buck Rogers joins in. It all gets very heavy! Frustrating, challenging, addictive — great!'

'Addictive and fun to play — maddening in fact. They include a 'Baby Bear Mode' for training purposes, but once you get down to the real task in hand it's very difficult. The graphics are excellent, really excellent, so are the tunes. A fine game — one of Artic's best.'

COMMENTS

Control keys: Q/A = up/down, O/P = left/right — but there are other options. Bottom row or 0 = time bomb
Joystick: Sinclair 2, Kempston or Fuller
Keyboard play: very responsive
Colour: very good
Graphics: fantastic!
Sound: excellent
Skill levels: 2 but progressive difficulty
Lives: 4
Screens: several
General rating: excellent, addictive.

Use of computer	**93%**
Graphics	**96%**
Playability	**89%**
Getting started	**82%**
Addictive qualities	**86%**
Value for money	**95%**
Overall	**90%**

Loony Zoo

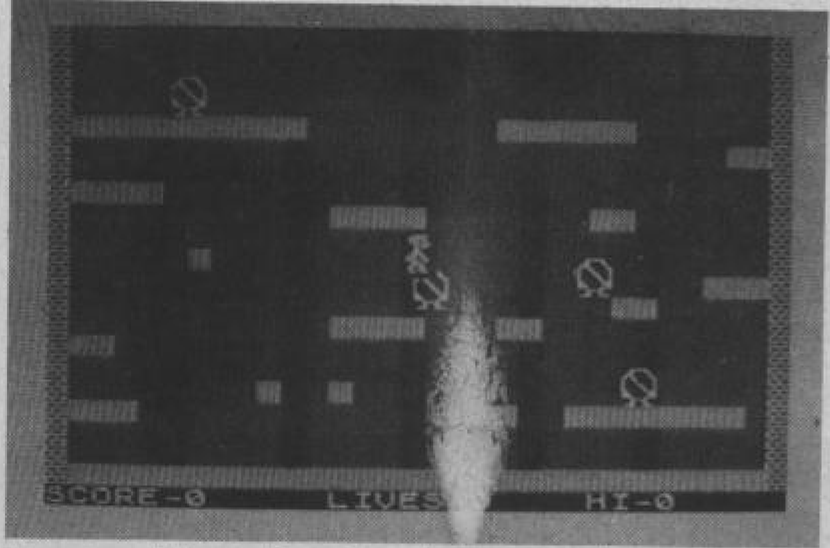
Producer: **Phipps Associates**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£5.95**
Language: **Machine code**
Author: **Tony Barber**

Whilst returning from one of those interminable journies to the furthest reaches of the known universe to reconnoitre some useless grid you would like to defend against 3D alien attack craft, you are captured by (guess what) — aliens. But these are a superior life form, and seeing as they are interested in other aliens (like you) they put you in their Zoo. The only way out, you discover (from the cassette inlay) is through all the cages in the zoo. Each cage holds a button (to open the door to the next) and a ferocious type of alien as well. There is a time limit per cage, because if you spend too long in there, your jailers will start to chase you in a kind of flying machine.

CRITICISM

'Well I suppose it has to be said, this is a *Manic Miner* copy. It doesn't have the generous graphics of *Manic Miner,* nor the complexities in the scenario for each cage. But none of this is to say that it isn't worth buying, because *Loony Zoo* is fiendishly hard to play. Each cage has a different type of alien, each with their own movement characteristics, and each cage has its own layout of ledges. This means that, like in *M M,* you have to learn the strategy of getting from A to B and back again. I noted quite quickly that the upward route is by no means the one to use on the way back down the cage. The graphics are nicely animated, especially your man who moves and jumps very well. Okay, it's not as mammoth as *Manic Miner* but it is totally addictive and utterly maddening.'

'The game is one of the most addictive I have played. It's difficult, requiring a lot of co-ordination and timing so as to arrive at the right place at the right time to avoid the nasties. The movement and graphics are very good, as is the animation. Apart from that, the screens are rather plain, with simple blocks for the ledges, which I think gives a pleasing and uncluttered look. I really enjoyed the game and found it difficult to eventually pull the plug on.'



Loony Tunes in Loony Zoo — jumping the walking washing machines.

Loony Zoo is a classic type of platform game, where you must make your man jump from level to level within each screen, avoid the rotten old aliens, and thus reach the flashing button to show you where the exit door is placed. This usually turns out to be right at the opposite point in the cage, which neccessitates retracing your steps. The demo shows six screens — whether there are more or not will be up to the player since this didn't prove to be an easy enough game for any reviewer to find out!

'This just goes to show, yet again, that a simple — even a well tested idea, can often be better than a complicated one. Top marks to Phipps for their best arcade game yet. It's basically a simpler version of *Manic Miner,* simple in the graphics and scenarios, not at all simple in the playing. Thoroughly addictive. I reccomend it.'



COMMENTS

Control keys: 6/7 = left right, M = jump
Joystick: none
Keyboard play: very responsive
Use of colour: quite good
Graphics: well animated, although two reviewers noted a tendency for the man to land not on top of a ledge sometimes, but more 'inside' it
Sound: not much, but good
Skill levels: 1
Lives: 3
Screens: 6
Loading: 2-part for intersections
General rating: highly addictive, very good.

Use of computer	80%
Graphics	80%
Playability	90%
Getting started	76%
Addictive qualities	93%
Value for money	90%
Overall	85%

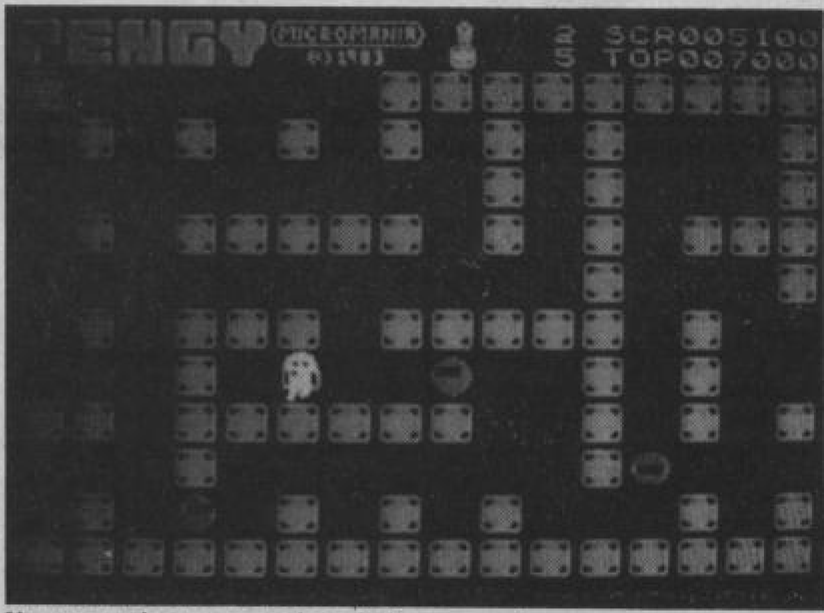
Pengy

Producer: **Micromania**
Memory required: **16K**
Retail price: **£5.95**
Language: **Machine code**
Author: **Dominic Wood**

Micromania certainly seem to have been busy recently, and have the distinction of being the first to advertise another of their products on the loading screen of a game. It's a very good screen too, with the *Pengy* title to the left and an ad for *Tutankhamun* on the right. Will we be seeing animated 'trailers' for games coming to this screen soon?

Pengy probably needs no introduction, and the game type has certainly been well copied lately. You guide a penguin round the lonely Artic wastes, except they're not so lonely. Snow bees chase around after your penguin trying to kill him off. Protection comes in the form of being able to shove the screenful of iceblocks around, hopefully crushing a nasty in the process. Pengy can also 'electrify' the wall of the screen, making any snow bee in contact with the wall go dizzy.

The peculiarities of each version, gives the Spectrum range its charm (a comparison soon?) Pengy's enemies in this version are less intelligent that in say, Freez' Bees, but to some extent, this makes the game more playable, since you have a better chance of getting into it. Also, when the fence is electrified, the dizzy bugs can be trundled over (effect lasts about four seconds). Another little quirk is that the last bee left on a screen becomes very cowardly and runs away, often suiciding rather than face the Wrath of Penguin (which gives bonus points). As each screen is cleared. (two bees on the first) the number of bees gets higher. As with some other versions those blocks of ice containing a bee, are a different colour for two seconds when the game starts, and after hatching, the bees are vulnerable to being trundled over for a few more seconds.



No one can hear you croak in the frozen wastes.

CRITICISM

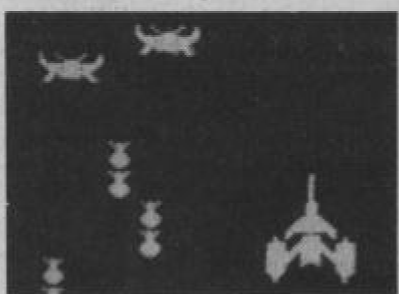
'From the nice loading screen onwards, the graphics of *Pengy* are colourful and detailed and amusing. The snow bees look positively comical before they vanish, and the penguin is nicely animated. I like this sort of game, and I find this version to be the most playable that I have seen yet.'

'A very good use of colour, and good graphics make this version very playable. Although the nasties are not quite so devilish as I have seen in other versions, the fact that they are not makes it easier to get further, faster. As each screen goes by, the sheer numbers make the game very challenging. It seems a little peculiar that you often don't have to kill of the remaining bug, but otherwise this is a very good version, with sensible keys.'

COMMENTS

Control keys: A/Z = up/down, N/M = left/right, rest of bottom row = push or melt or electrify; also cursors plus zero.
Joystick: Kempston, AGF, Protek, cursor clip ons
Keyboard play: reasonable
Colour: very good
Graphics: well detailed and animated, a little jerky but nothing to complain of
Sound: good
Skill levels: progressive difficulty
Lives: 3
General rating: above average to good, and reasonably addictive.

Use of computer	75%
Graphics	68%
Playability	73%
Getting started	75%
Addictive qualities	71%
Value for money	70%
Overall	**72%**



Alien Swarm/Arena

Producer: **K-Tel**
Memory required: **16K**
Retail price: **£6.95**
Language: **Machine code**

K-Tel, known best for their good value records, have done much the same with computer games now, that is, taken older games and pacakaged them two to a cassette under the heading of **DOUBLE SIDER.** Side 1 here is *Alien Swarm,* a game from early last year put out by **Titan.** It's a very straight forward shoot em up with a laser base and various alien forms, swarming down the screen in attack waves of 50. Every few aliens shot, there is an update sheet which tells you how many remain. When they are all shot you move onto another type. Some are bombs, some drop bombs.

Arena by **Steve Curtis,** is somewhat more original. You have been captured by a race of aliens who, like the ancient Romans, enjoy gladiatorial combat, and you are in the arena. From all directions come comets, aimed at you and bouncing off the walls to come back again. You are armed with a deflector shield for protection and deflecting the shots not only saves your life but also gains you points in what is a no-win situation.

CRITICISM

'*Alien Swarm* is a pretty typical shoot em up with drawbacks. Movement is restricted when firing quickly and the game lacks imagination. The graphics are fairly good though. *Arena* is very original and I enjoyed it on that level. The shield can be moved from side to side, above and below and your man moved right to left as well. It all goes quite fast and is improved with the skill and speed levels. Top marks for originality but not very addictive.'

'Alien Swarm *is quite a good game, but very simple and in the end rather boring. Arena can be fast, and is the best K-Tel cassette but it's still nothing to shout about. I think they'll have to do better games than this to stay around in this field.'*

'I remember *Alien Swarm* quite well, and wasn't all that knocked out by it when it was new. There are so many better shoot em ups around, both older and newer ones. *Arena* is quite a lot of fun to play, especially as you can combine 7 skill levels with 9 playing speeds. The higher the skill level, the more there is in the air against you. At the same time, the more successful you are, the more the side walls move in to grab you in a smaller area. The idea of 'double siders' is hardly new, **Abacus** almost always give you two programs on one cassette, and those are usually original in concept.'

COMMENTS

Control keys: *Alien Swarm,* Z/X left/right, SPACE = fire: *Arena* keys are user-definable, rotate and move left/right
Joystick: *Arena,* most types via user-definable keys
Keyboard play: responsive
Use of colour: poor to fair
Graphics: average
Sound: average, nice effect in *Arena*.
General rating: fair to average

Use of computer	52%
Graphics	55%
Playability	62%
Getting started	70%
Addictive qualities	48%
Value for money	54%
Overall	**57%**

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We preview the new MICROMEGA game

CODE NAME MAT

After the success of their 3D games *Luna Crabs* and *Deathchase* **Micromega** are preparing to release their largest game yet. Called **Code Name Mat**, it is an epic 3D space arcade style game with strategy overtones.



Programmer of *Starclash* and Micromega's new mega-hit is **Derek Brewster (left), seen here discussing some points with Neil Hooper,** General Manager of Micromega.

Micromega began quietly enough with what they refer to as their 'family parlour' games. *Roulette* was probably the best known. None of them were exactly raved over by the critics, but Micromega's General Manager, **Neil Hooper**, says that they did well enough, and established Micromega's name. Those games also gave the new company the market experience it needed, and an early decision taken was that Micromega should ideally concentrate on 3D games. The two best known games programmers working with Micromega are **Mervyn Estcourt** (*Luna Crabs* and *Deathchase*) and **Derek Brewster** (*Starclash* and **Code Name Mat**). Both writers have their own 3D routines, Mervyn writing in planar 3D (where things appear on the horizon and grow larger as they approach) and Derek writing in polar 3D (where every point in view is accurately plotted and its position relative to other points in view is constantly generated by the computer). The latter form of 3D is ideal for space games like **Code Name Mat**.

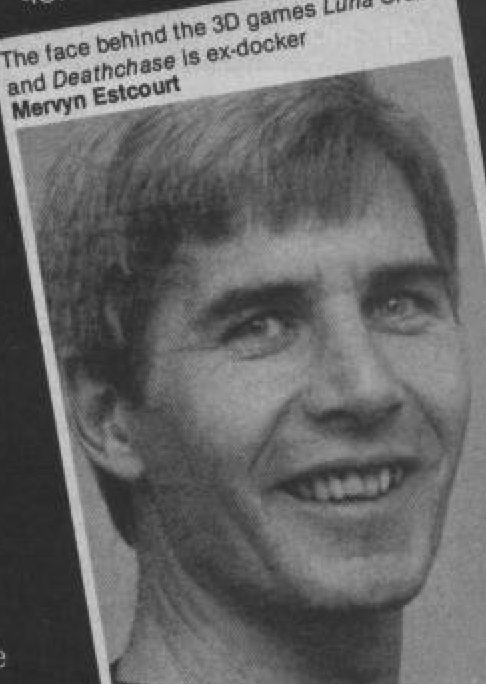
To describe **Code Name Mat** is no easy task. Very crudely it could be described as Star Trek with loads of knobs on, but it is essentially light years on from Star Trek games. The baddies are a race of aliens called the **Myons**, and they are attacking the solar system with a view to capturing Earth. You, as **Mat**, must save the solar system. In the game there are sectors corresponding to the planets from Pluto at the outermost edge of the system right in to Earth itself. Around each planet there are numerous sub-sections in which you must fight the Myon invader craft and motherships. They will attempt to destroy the planet and use it to build more ships ready for the next planetary attack.

Within a planetary system your ships travels from sector to sector by means of **Warp Gates**, and between planetary systems there is a **Star Gate.** You also have troopships, which can be directed to guard vital areas of the system, and it is this element of the game where strategy is required to use them to your best advantage.

The long range scan, which can be viewed from many angles, all takes place in animated real time, and truly allows you to set your attack position before diving back into forward or rear view 3D in which stars and aliens move logically. The same procedures must be employed for navigating accurately on the warp and star gates. Navigation skills as well as 'flying' skills are required when docking into an orbit around one of the planets for refuelling and re-arming, and provide some exciting visuals.

Code Name Mat (which will be fully reviewed in the next issue) should be available soon. It is compatible with Kempston, AGF, Protek and Sinclair 2 joysticks, has an average game playing time of approximately one hour on skill level 2. There are three skill levels. It is for the 48K Spectrum, priced £6.95

The face behind the 3D games *Luna Crabs* and *Deathchase* is ex-docker **Mervyn Estcourt**

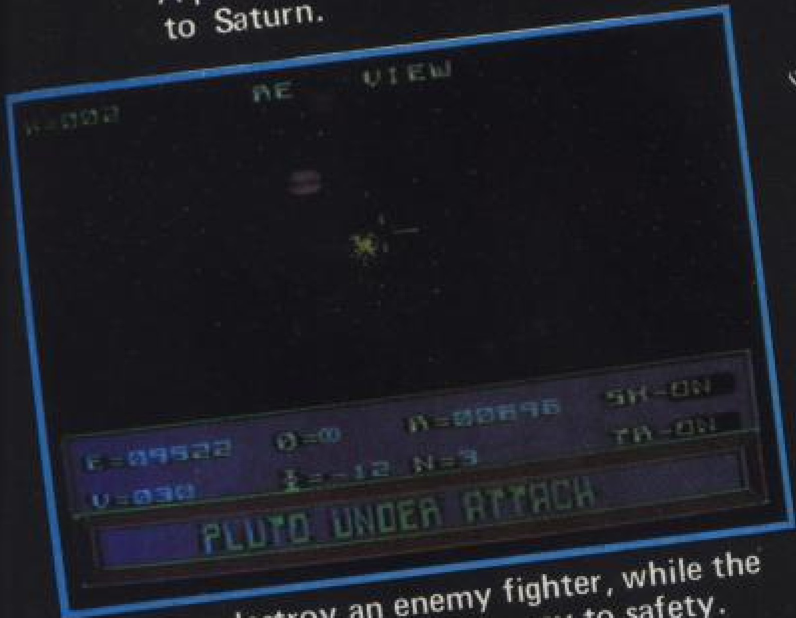




A planet saved, and the refuelling drone returns to Saturn.



Two MYON fighter craft roar up from behind.



Our lasers destroy an enemy fighter, while the MYON Mothership scuttles away to safety.



Navigating into a Warp Gate is a tricky job.

In orbit around Earth, and the refuelling drone heads our way.





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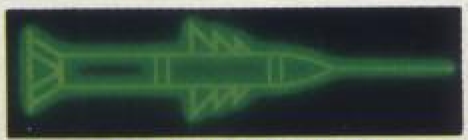


Will you accept this mission?

In your Z5 Luna Hover Fighter you must penetrate the 3 successive Seiddab defensive zones and destroy their command base.

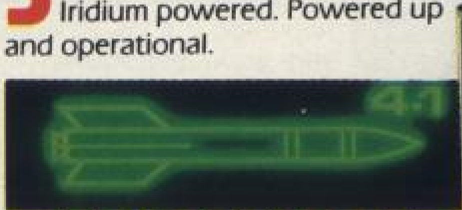
The state of your fighter and its armaments along with status reports of the Seiddab defences is given below.

Good luck! May the power be with you.



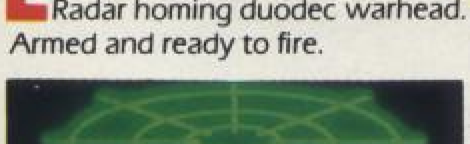
·LASERS·

Short range weapon system. Iridium powered. Powered up and operational.



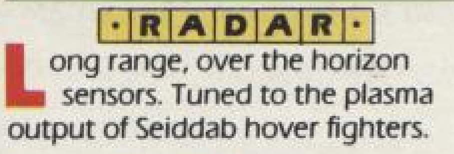
·MISSILES·

Long range weapon system. Radar homing duodec warhead. Armed and ready to fire.



·RADAR·

Long range, over the horizon sensors. Tuned to the plasma output of Seiddab hover fighters.



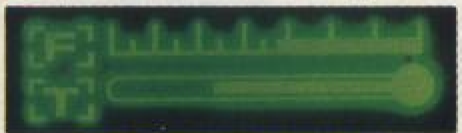
·NAVIGATION·

Locked on to the Seiddab command base. Head up path display.



·SHIELDS·

Di-lithium powered. Combat power level. Status all green.



·GAUGES·

Long range propeluene tanks. Status full. Combat shielded. Hull temperature status low.



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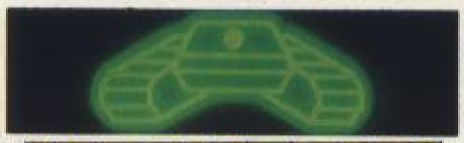
This is the latest and most difficult mission in the long running struggle against Seiddab aliens – are you prepared to accept this mission?

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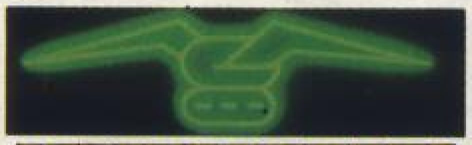
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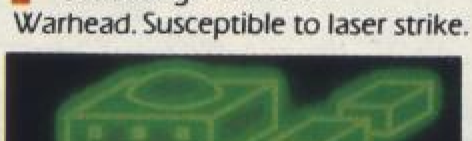
AERIAL·MINES

Contain proximity fuses, explodes on detecting hoverfighter. Susceptible to laser strike.



MISSILE·SILO

Final line of defence – self activating. Hewstron Warhead. Susceptible to laser strike.



COMMAND·BASE

Your objective – heavily defended requires many strikes to destroy – you must not fail.

3D LUNATTACK

Microspeech Compatible

Reviews

3D Seiddab Attack

Producer: **Hewson Consultants**
Memory required: **16K**
Retail price: **£5.95**
Language: **Machine code**
Author: **Steve Turner**



Colour screen above — a fistful of baddies bomb the bezazz out of Birmingham.

In a world turned upside down and back to front, the Baddies are back again as Seiddab. We first encountered them in the deepest reaches of space, alone in our attack craft in *3D Space Wars*. Now the Seiddab have landed on earth and are attacking the cities at night.

You are in control of a 'Drone' — a sort of remote control modern tank, patrolling the streets on the look out for the Seiddab space ship in your sector. The screen display shows a 'cockpit' view through the front of your tank, the details of its armour plated front and hatches before you. Beyond that, the darkened city streets stretch out in perspective, the sides lined by glass tower blocks ablaze with myriad lights, their inhabitants evidently happily unaware of the nightmare taking place outside.

Below the cockpit view there is a local A to Z street finder — a radar which shows the city blocks, streets and the enemy fliers as well as your own position. This radar actually wraps around top to bottom and left to right, and so is theoretically infinite. To its left are your three drones (lives) and the status of your man. To the right are the scores for players one and two and the hi-score.

The object of the game is to destroy at least ten Seiddab (on the first screen — more later) at which time your radar will detect the Task Force Leader and identify him by a trail left on the radar. To clear the screen you must destroy him whereupon the action switches to the countryside.

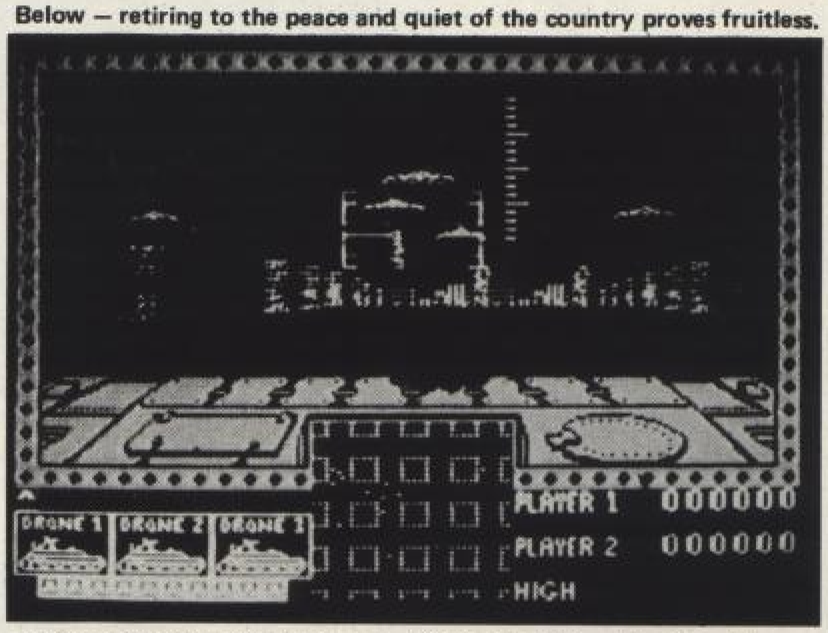
CRITICISM

'The game is fairly decent but a little on the slow side. Reasonable graphics and good explosion effects. I found my interest began to wane quite soon'.

'The 3D graphics work really well in this game, which almost borders on being a simulation. The city streets of Birmingham may not be so wide, but the night time view of this city centre certainly looks like the Bull Ring Centre! I liked the idea of your drone's missile launcher, which fires from above your head, leaving a smokey trail behind it, as it homes in on the Seiddab attack craft. It's path can be guided by keeping the enemy fired at in the sights — not an easy task as they jiggle about all over the place, often sneakily firing from outside your traverse range. Forward control is automatic, allowing you to traverse left and right and raise or lower the gun sight. You can turn at right angles only at street intersections. It is quite difficult to find and track down the task force leader, but thrilling when you finally spot him. The next screen cuts to the countryside, with the city twinkling in the distance, and the Seiddab attack in waves, dropping bombs on you which you must shoot down before they land. I liked this game much better than 3D Conbat Zone *or* Rommel's Revenge.*'*

'The graphics work very well, with only one complaint. 'You' are the flashing dot on the radar screen, but in the heat of battle it's very confusing and might have been better if 'you' could have showed up in a different colour to those of the enemy dots. You must watch your ammo, although the Hewson drones seem to have a generous amount on board. All in all, quite an enjoyable and challenging game. Don't be put off by its apparent slowness at first, it grows on you anyway.'

Below — retiring to the peace and quiet of the country proves fruitless.

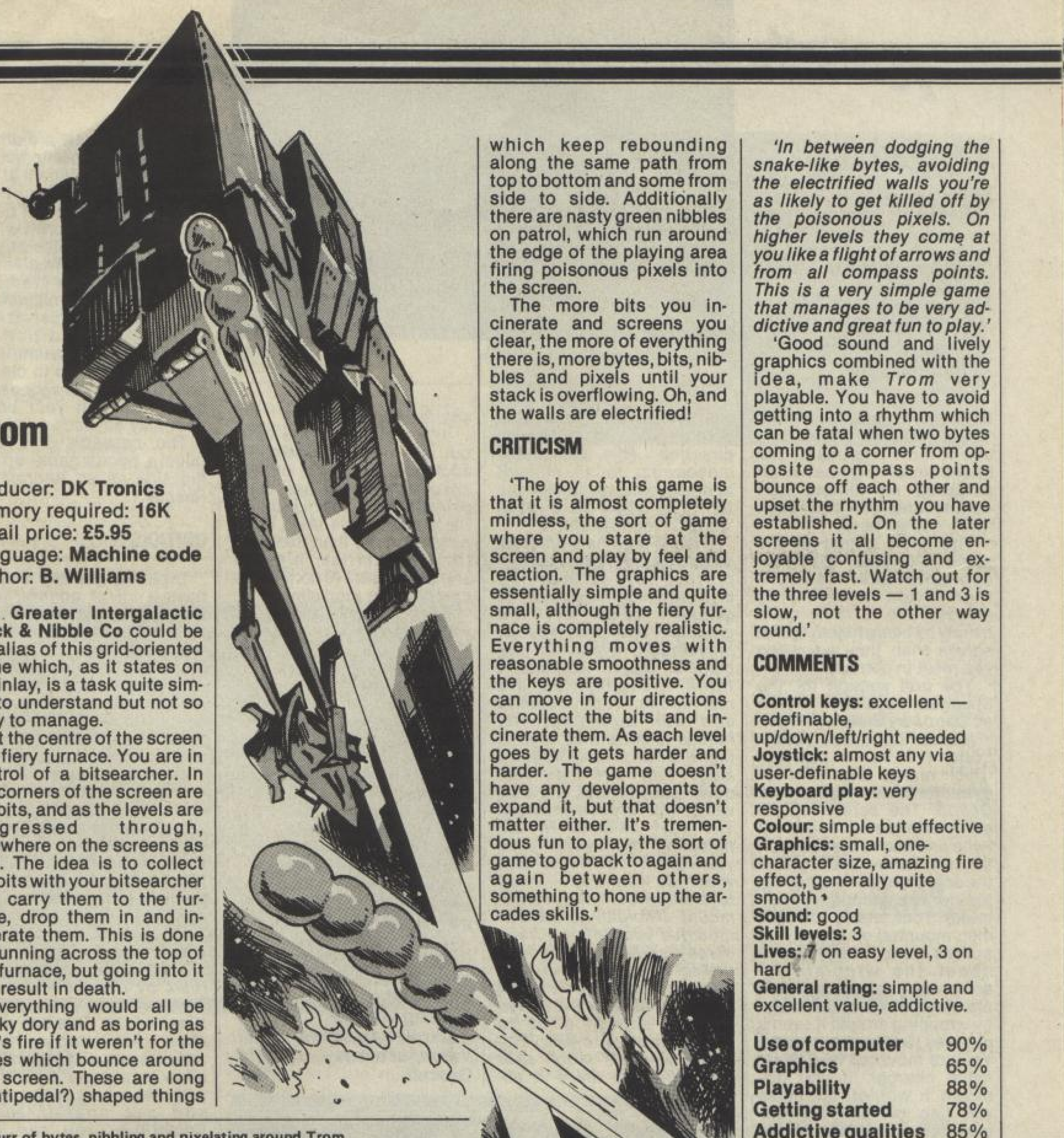


COMMENTS

Control keys: Cursors with 0 to fire
Joystick: AGF, Protek or cursor clip on, and Kempston (watch out for Kempston command during loading)
Keyboard play: responsive
Use of colour: reasonable and realistic
Graphics: good 3D, fast and smooth with good explosions
Sound: reasonable
Skill levels: progressive difficulty
Lives: 3
Screens: 2
General rating: One review unimpressed, but the other two liked it a lot. Good to very good, especially considering that it's all packed into 16K.

Use of computer	75%
Graphics	79%
Playability	81%
Getting started	78%
Addictive qualities	83%
Value for money	78%
Overall	**79%**





Trom

Producer: **DK Tronics**
Memory required: **16K**
Retail price: **£5.95**
Language: **Machine code**
Author: **B. Williams**

The Greater Intergalactic Stack & Nibble Co could be the alias of this grid-oriented game which, as it states on the inlay, is a task quite simple to understand but not so easy to manage.

At the centre of the screen is a fiery furnace. You are in control of a bitsearcher. In the corners of the screen are the bits, and as the levels are progressed through, elsewhere on the screens as well. The idea is to collect the bits with your bitsearcher and carry them to the furnace, drop them in and incinerate them. This is done by running across the top of the furnace, but going into it will result in death.

Everything would all be hunky dory and as boring as hell's fire if it weren't for the bytes which bounce around the screen. These are long (centipedal?) shaped things which keep rebounding along the same path from top to bottom and some from side to side. Additionally there are nasty green nibbles on patrol, which run around the edge of the playing area firing poisonous pixels into the screen.

The more bits you incinerate and screens you clear, the more of everything there is, more bytes, bits, nibbles and pixels until your stack is overflowing. Oh, and the walls are electrified!

CRITICISM

'The joy of this game is that it is almost completely mindless, the sort of game where you stare at the screen and play by feel and reaction. The graphics are essentially simple and quite small, although the fiery furnace is completely realistic. Everything moves with reasonable smoothness and the keys are positive. You can move in four directions to collect the bits and incinerate them. As each level goes by it gets harder and harder. The game doesn't have any developments to expand it, but that doesn't matter either. It's tremendous fun to play, the sort of game to go back to again and again between others, something to hone up the arcades skills.'

'In between dodging the snake-like bytes, avoiding the electrified walls you're as likely to get killed off by the poisonous pixels. On higher levels they come at you like a flight of arrows and from all compass points. This is a very simple game that manages to be very addictive and great fun to play.'

'Good sound and lively graphics combined with the idea, make *Trom* very playable. You have to avoid getting into a rhythm which can be fatal when two bytes coming to a corner from opposite compass points bounce off each other and upset the rhythm you have established. On the later screens it all become enjoyable confusing and extremely fast. Watch out for the three levels — 1 and 3 is slow, not the other way round.'

COMMENTS

Control keys: excellent — redefinable, up/down/left/right needed
Joystick: almost any via user-definable keys
Keyboard play: very responsive
Colour: simple but effective
Graphics: small, one-character size, amazing fire effect, generally quite smooth
Sound: good
Skill levels: 3
Lives: 7 on easy level, 3 on hard
General rating: simple and excellent value, addictive.

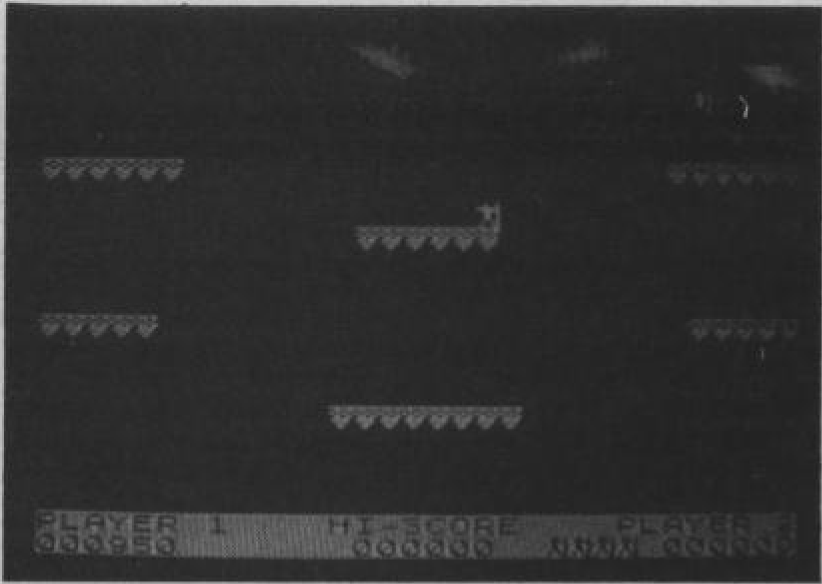
Use of computer	90%
Graphics	65%
Playability	88%
Getting started	78%
Addictive qualities	85%
Value for money	83%
Overall	82%

A blurr of bytes, nibbling and pixelating around Trom.



Winged Warlords

Producer: **C.D.S. Microsystems**
Memory required: **16K**
Retail price: **£5.95**
Language: **Machine code**
Author: **M. Lamb**



Flying squad in jousting competition.

Based on the arcade original 'Joust', *Winged Warlords* is one of three versions for the Spectrum of a game which achieved an almost cult status, and yet has been rarely copied here.

The basic object of the game is to joust with your oponents and dismount them from their flying steeds. This is done quite simply by being higher up the screen than they are when you meet in combat.

The first version for the Spectrum was *Joust*, renamed *Ostron* by **Softek.** *Winged Warlords* does not follow quite the same pattern, which makes it good value even if you already own *Ostron.* The screen sports six platforms arranged in twos one above the other on the left, centre and right of the screen, offset so they actually make up four separate levels. Your enemy are blue men mounted on blue flying horses, and they bound about the wrap-around screen at a fair pace. There are three of them (although by wrapping around it seems at times like there are more). You are mounted on a white flying charger. If you dismount a warrior, his horse will flap off and the dismounted man sinks to the ground, or a convenient ledge and awaits the return of his steed. When the beast returns it will be red and make the knight a red warrior — these tend to be more accurate in their attack patterns. The way to avoid this is to kill off a dismounted knight as soon as possible.

The other serious problem is the red Evil Bird of War, which appears at random and is invulnerable to your lance.

CRITICISM

'This is a fairly typical jousting game with good graphics and sound. Your horse seems to have a certain amount of inertia, i.e. he will slow down and stop before going in a reverse direction. This can make manoevring rather difficult at times, but it all adds to the fun. The game is a good 'Joust'. I recommend it.

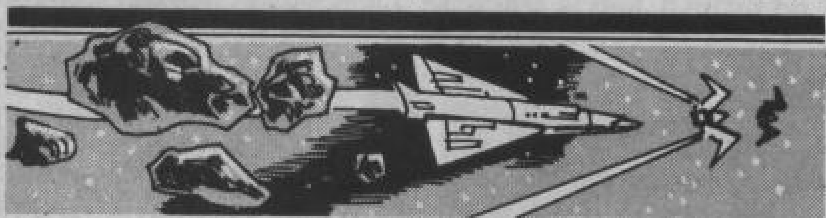
'This is a game with quite simple elements so a screen picture of it can be misleading because it doesn't show off the graphics and the type of movement, which is the game's charm. Actually, I think the graphics are marvellous, fast, detailed and well animated. The horses tuck up their legs in flight, but as they approach a ledge they put their feet down ready to land, and their wings flap very convincingly. The real skill is in anticipating movement since your steed can't just turn when you want it to — it has to 'brake' first. When you dismount a knight, or are dismounted yourself, the freed horse just flap off the side of the screen and vanish. You are then 'reborn' somewhere else until all your lives have gone. A difficult game to master and fun to play. Pity there weren't more skill levels in it to make it absolutely top notch'.

'It's a simple game idea, but very playable and quite addictive because of the speed at which it has to be played. I would have thought there could have been more developments than there are to give skilled players something else to do. But the graphics are marvellous.'

COMMENTS

Control keys: Simple, Z/X = left/right, SPACE = flap wings
Joystick: none
Keyboard play: responsive, but with built in interia
Use of colour: fairly simple
Graphics: very good
Sound: good
Skill levels: 1
Lives: 4
Features: 1 or 2 players
Loading time: 45 seconds
General rating: good to very good and medium addictive.

Use of computer	77%
Graphics	83%
Playability	80%
Getting started	72%
Addictive qualities	80%
Value for money	79%
Overall	79%



Proteus

Producer: **Abacus**
Memory required: **16K**
Retail price: **£5.95**
Language: **Machine code**
Author: **Kevin Flynn**

Proteus is the fourth game in a series (all four may be bought in a games pack as we reported in last month's issue, price £14.95) which began with *Avenger* and *Sentinel.* This is a fast and lethal shoot em up game with asteroidal overtones.

A Quadrant of the enemy galaxy, littered with planet debris and patrolled by hostile aliens, stretches between your main battle fleet and the enemy's planet. The object is to destroy the enemy's communications system which consists of four transmitters, one in each corner of the quadrant. A chart shows the quadrant with the squares containing the transmitters in yellow.

The alien craft are armed with heavy laser cannons and are very intelligent. If you succeed in clearing them from a sector you will be attacked by hunter craft which fire homing missiles at you. Your craft are armed with a laser and (the famous Abacus) guided missiles. It can rotate or thrust at two speeds. In addition to destroying the transmitters, you are supposed to clear a path through the very dense debris, so that your battle fleet may advance safely.

The cassette also contains a bonus game on the flip side called *Android Pit Rescue.*

CRITICISM

'Abacus games tend to have a lot of control keys, thisis no exception (5 keys for control, same 5 keys for weapon control). The graphics are rather small and simple, and the game isn't as much fun as it could be because of the control keys. Not very inspiring to say the least.'

'The screen is packed with debris which you must clear, but in fact the debris itself contributes to your defences against the very fast and decisive enemy craft. This isn't just an aim-well-and-fire game, strategy is involved too. The enemy will fire at your guided missiles, so when there are four or five in a sector, you have to fool them by flying the missiles all over the place, so they turn and fire. This can delay their inexorable move towards you and sometimes allow you to get a burst off with the short range laser and get one of them. Sometimes you can fool them into firing at the missile as you sweep it past very close on a tight curve, and then blow it up when it's inside their defences, and them with it. The graphics are small but very sharp and fast. To make life easier the weapons and ship control are on the same keys — the ship won't move, for instance, if you have just fired a missile, so that the rotate keys will guide the missile. Very addictive.'

'The enemy craft are very fast, defensive and intelligent — a group will attack your possition, and while you are firing at them, another will try and sneak up on you from behind. The idea

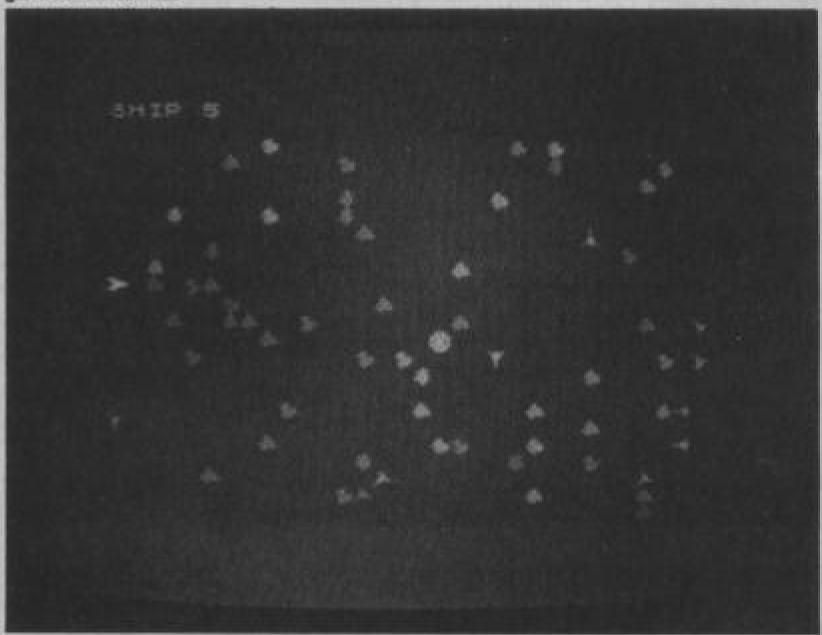
behind Proteus is simple, but also very playable. Controlling a guided missile can be difficult, not to say suicidal, especially when they are as guidable as these are. If you clear a sector you should get out fast, the hunters have guided missiles too and they are fatally accurate. This game will take a long time to master and has a very good addictive quality.'

COMMENTS

Control keys: A/S rotate/guide missiles, SPACE = thrust, SPACE & SYM. SHIFT = boosters on, SYM. SHIFT = fire photons, M = fire missiles, SPACE = detonate missiles, K = galactic map
Joystick: none
Keyboard play: exceptional fast and responsive
Use of colour: good
Graphics: simple but effective
Sound: good
Skill levels: 5 speeds
Lives: 5
Screens: 20 battle grids
General rating: for players with fast fingers, an addictive game.

Use of computer	60%
Graphics	58%
Playability	67%
Getting started	74%
Addictive qualities	68%
Value for money	66%
Overall	**66%**

The Abacus tetralogy moves into enemy territory with those lethal guided missiles.



Double Trouble

Producer: **Starlite**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£5.90**
Language: **Machine code**
Author: **Tim Boone**

Double Trouble is a new game from a new company written entirely in machine code, and which claims to use over 150 UDGs. The basic idea seems quite original — Tarmac Tim is a painter on of yellow lines (the sort of person who normally heralds the coming of Yellow Meanies and parking tickets). You must guide him around busy Sinclair Road, painting lines as he goes, surrounding the various pedestrians with them. The idea is that the numerous cars can't cross a yellow line and so won't run over the pedestrians who resemble Custer making his last stand at Little Big Highstreet. At the base of the screen is Tim's shed and some houses. If Tim runs into these, or any of the cars, he is killed and spills his can of yellow paint everywhere. Mucky!

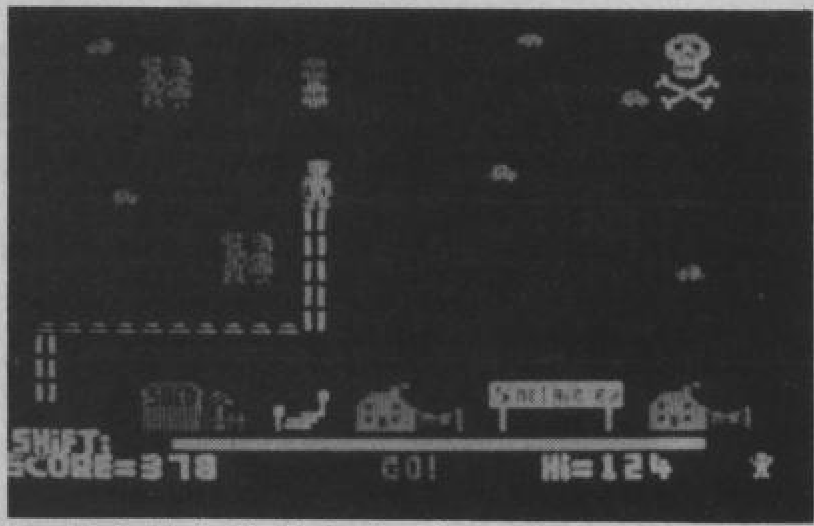
In fact, in some respects this game resembles **Romik's** *Shark Attack* in as much as you set out to protect something by weaving something around it to keep the monsters at bay.

CRITICISM

'There's a nice static display but generally the graphics seem to be rather badly proportioned and the movement is a bit jerky. Line drawing is an odd affair; when you turn corners gaps are sometimes left. The game lacks playability and hence, addictivity. I was left unimpressed.'

'I wonder whether this was play tested? The liklihood of getting Tarmac Tim from his starting point to where the three randomly dotted bunches of pedestrians stand seems almost impossible. They turn to skulls and cross bones within seconds as the tiny cars dart around like mad wiping them out. This then leaves you with time on your hands with nothing to do but surround yourself with yellow lines to keep the cars away until the 'shift' runs out. The cars are allowed to wrap around as well, so your chances of surviving are pretty remote. All this makes it sadly unplayable.'

'All the elements of this game seem to be at odds with themselves. I know things are never entirely real in computer games, but it seems odd that the pedestrians (for the few seconds they are alive) are ten times as big as the cars which kill them. Also Tim can't draw yellow lines to the top or edges of the wrap around screen, so he has no chance of protecting pedestrians placed at the edges. Sorry, it just doesn't work.'



Keep Death off the Sinclair Road — paint a yellow line . . .

COMMENTS

Control keys: Q/A = up/down, O/P = left/right
Joystick: none
Keyboard play: responsive, 4 directions
Use of colour: good
Graphics: okay on Tim, extremely jerky on cars
Sound: above average
Skill levels: progressive difficulty
Lives: 3
General rating: a good idea spoiled by the gameplay elements.

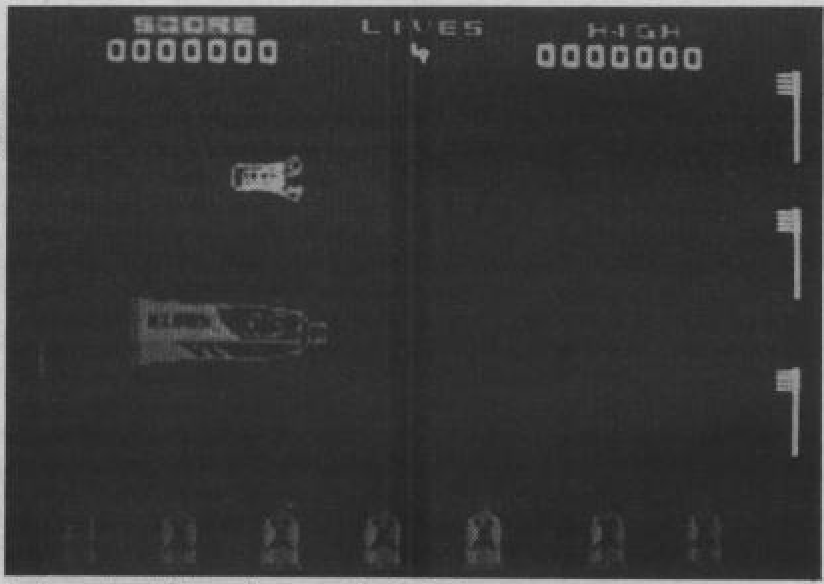
Use of computer	55%
Graphics	50%
Playability	30%
Getting started	50%
Addictive qualities	38%
Value for money	35%
Overall	**43%**

Castle Colditz/Battle of the Toothpaste Tubes

Producer: **K-Tel**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£6.95**
Language: **BASIC & machine code**

Castle Colditz the first side of this **K-Tel DOUBLE SIDER,** is a text-only adventure, where you must escape from the famous German Prisoner of War camp, which was supposed to be an impossible task, though many allied prisoners did get out. Whether you will get out is largely dependent on whether you really want to get in to start with.

Battle of the Toothpaste Tubes is a complete contrast, an arcade game with a theme which encroaches



A ring of confidence is your only defence.

upon the hallowed ground first trod by **Imagine** with *Molar Maul*. It's quite different however. Here you must guide a large toothpaste tube, which lies on its side pointing to the right, and fire blobs of toothpaste so that they land exactly on the head of the of brushes which are rising on the right of the screen. If you get a blob on the handle it bounces back and you lose a life if hit. Below you are 7 other toothpaste tubes firing up at you, and at the top a pair of false teeth go flashing across the screen. To guard against attack by the lower tubes, there is a fluoride shield which vanishes as soon as you start shooting again.

CRITICISM

'Colditz is text only, but this adventure is not up to the standards expected today. B.O.T.T.T. is a simple game that doesn't have much point to it. Although it has responsive graphics, they are rather poor.'

I have nothing against text-only adventures, indeed a good one is better than a graphics one as far as I am concerned, but with such adventures, the use of descriptions and the way they are written (I don't mean programmed either) is essential to the creation of atmosphere and therefore, enjoyment. On that score Colditz fails abysmally. It's a series of barren rooms with poor descriptions and a few directions available. Simply no fun at all. The arcade game included on the tape is quite original, but somehow all the elements are mismatched so that it is difficult to play in a silly way.'

'With Colditz there was so little atmosphere that it failed to be exciting and I rapidly got bored with it. I managed somewhat better when it came to toothpaste tubes, although the fluoride barrier proved ineffective against dentures! The game is fun and original. It has some very good graphics and nice sound. The main problem is the number of keys required (7) and the economy bumper sized toothpaste tube you control, which is so large it becomes a ludicrously easy target to hit, hence more time is spent avoiding shots than actually shooting. But I still liked it!'

COMMENTS

Control keys: (B.O.T.T.T.) Q/A up/down, O/P left/right, SPACE = shoot paste, M = drop paste, I = fluoride shield
Joystick: Kempston
Keyboard play: responsive (B.O.T.T.T.)
Use of colour: good (B.O.T.T.T.)
Graphics: good (B.O.T.T.T.)
Sound: fair (B.O.T.T.T.)
Skill levels: 3
Lives: 5
General rating: poor adventure, average arcade game

Use of computer	53%
Graphics	43%
Playability	60%
Getting started	52%
Addictive qualities	50%
Value for money	40%
Overall	**50%**

Triplex

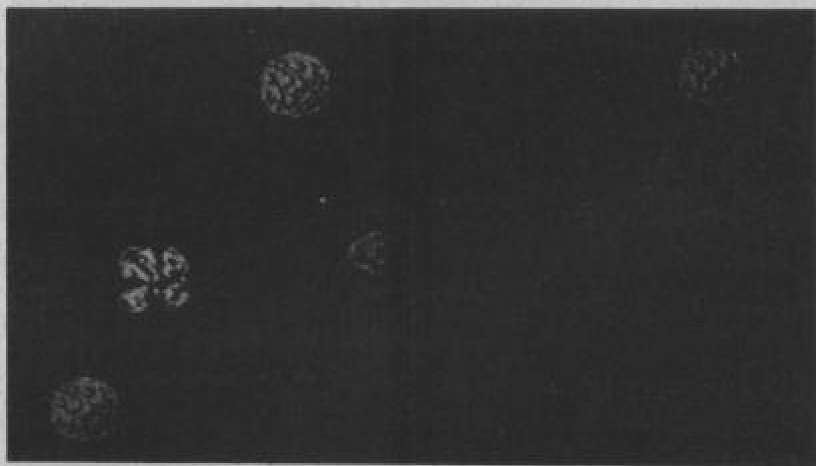
Producer: **Workforce**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£5.50**
Language: **Machine code**

This isn't so much a tape with three games on it, as it is a game with three distinct parts. The common theme is your weird looking space craft which could have come from a 1950s Dan Dare comic strip.

All three parts are linked by a pause for breath and the Workforce clenched fist logo. Part one pits you against a bunch of runaway moons which fill the sky, moving in a variety of directions. Your crafts laser's converge at a hot spot and you must centre this hotspot on the moon to be destroyed, although it takes some time before they glow white and explode. When the screen is cleared of moons you can move on to part two.

Here you are in a strange part of space where a fine dust of debris moves in opposite directions away from the centre towards the top and bottom of the screen. Touching any of it is instant death. As well as the debris there are several alien creatures floating around which you must avoid as you cross the screen four times in succession to get through to part three. After your second crossing a winged bird adds to the fun, travelling diagonally.

In part three you find yourself at the left of the screen firing across at several hunter killer ships which fire groups of missiles back at you. These heat-seeking devices are extremely accurate.



Excellent, three dimensional looking moons in Triplex.

CRITICISM

'This is a very unusual game, not at all in the mainstream of arcade games at all. The graphics are very inventive, almost gothic, and quite muted in colour. The shading and detail on the moons is very good, even managing to lool like something out of Satr Wars. Controlling your ship is quite difficult as the four direction keys are used in combination to fire. Not very addictive I think, but certainly unusual and interesting.'

'The second part of the game is a bit like a celestial 'Frogger' although it also reminded me of the bit where the Israelites cross the Red Sea. Each section has its own difficultities and requires its own sort of skill to survive, especially the third bit. The graphics are different, well detailed and smooth. I thought it was quite good.'

'Three games in one, can't be very good, I thought, but I was wrong. Getting across screen two is difficult and destroying all the ships on screen three is even harder. I like the way your ship starts off huge (made up of magnified pixels), filling the screen, and then zooms down to playing size on the start position of the screen before each life or section. It's a very good idea.'

COMMENTS

Control keys: 1/Q = up/down, O/P = left right, and pressing any two together fires laser
Joystick: none
Keyboard play: responsive, although a little odd with fire/move control linked
Use of colour: good
Graphics: good
Sound: good sound and varied
Skill levels: 1
Lives: 5
Screens: 3
General rating: above average and unusual.

Use of computer	57%
Graphics	70%
Playability	68%
Getting started	70%
Addictive qualities	65%
Value for money	66%
Overall	**66%**

Update:

If you're marooned someplace, you worry about how to get home. Even old Crusoe, on a palm-fringed paradise with domestic servants, worried about the boat home — and he knew where he was. The passengers of the liner "Arcadia" knew only that their 'island' was one planet of an uncharted Dyson-Sphere solar system. It was a harsh, unfriendly place...

THE TERMINAL MAN





STORY BY KELVIN GOSNELL© DRAWN BY OLIVER FREY©



THIS MUST BE IT, CROSS,
CORRECT, THE SHAPES ARE COMPATIBLE WITH SHIP HULLS. TRACES OF **NUCLEAR** ACTIVITY TOO, **MOVE TO THE RIGHT** — WE COME IN FROM THERE, IT IS NOT WELL GUARDED —
YOU WERE RIGHT, CROSS — THOUGH GOD KNOWS HOW ...
I KNOW — IT IS ALL THAT MATTERS, **IN HERE** ...
THESE **ARE** SHIPS, THIS WAS ONCE A COMMAND OR GUIDANCE CENTRE — I MUST **INTERROGATE** WHAT IS LEFT OF ITS **MEMORY**, **YOU** MONITOR OUTSIDE THREATS ...
WHAT? WHO **ARE YOU KIDDING?** NO ONE CAN ...
LEAVE IT, MANDRELL — **HE CAN DO IT!**
... I DON'T UNDERSTAND **HOW**, BUT ALL THREE ELEMENTS WERE **SMASHED** TOGETHER WHEN THE **ARCADIA** CRASHED ...
— HE'S **MESHING** DIRECT WITH THIS OLD SYSTEM'S **STORAGE BANKS** ...
PRETTY NEAT TRICK! BET HE COULD CLEAN UP A **FORTUNE** MANIPULATING THE GAMBLING MACHINES BACK ON **EARTH**, EH, JIN?
JIN?
SOMETHING COMING — SOMETHING **HIDEOUS!** THE DOOR ...
WHAT ARE YOU GABBLING ABOUT, GIRL!?
— **I CAN READ ITS MIND!** THERE IS NOTHING THERE BUT **LOATHING** AND **BLOOD LUST! THE DOOR** ...

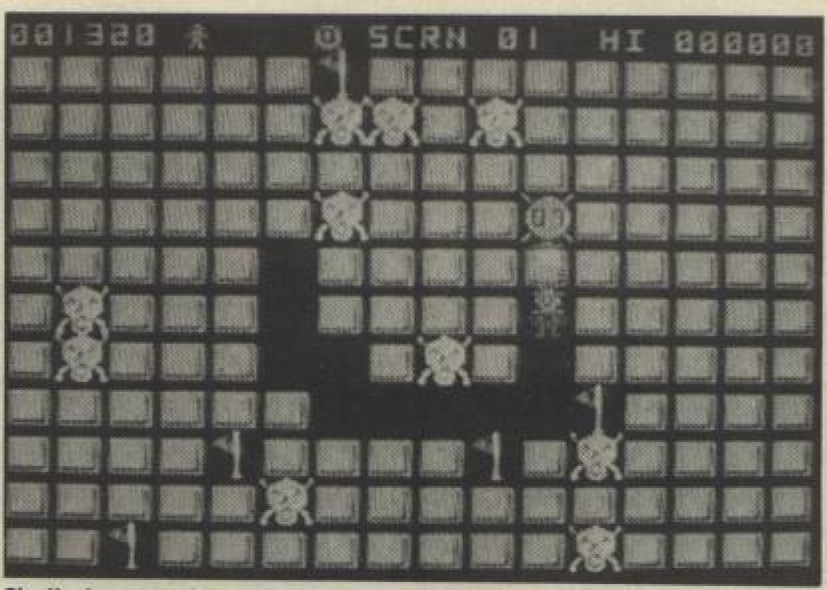


More action next month!

Reviews

Timebomb

Producer: **C.D.S. Microsystems**
Memory required: **16K**
Retail price: **£5.95**
Language: **Machine code**



Skulls, boots and bombs as the time ticks away.

The first computer heroes were simply 'you', now players are offered a plethora of names and characters. The lates from C.D.S. is Cedric — that's 'you' — who looks like a bear (bears seem to be a favourite). The screen contains 176 squares or pale blue tiles on a black ground in an eleven up by sixteen across grid. Ten squares are occupied by skulls and crossbones and six by little flags on posts. In another sits Cedric and somewhere on the screen, one square is taken up by the yellow timebomb.

The time bombs are no joke — they start off with a figure of 30 which instantly starts running down to zero, but not in seconds. The time actually allowed is more like five seconds. The object is to move Cedric around the screen and reach the time bomb before it goes off. When Cedric touches a square he erases it, and as he cannot move onto an already blanked square, this tends to make life difficult, especially with six bombs to defuse per screen. Fortunately it is possible to scroll a horizontal row along, which means you can get Cedric to a spot nearer the bomb and avoid the blank squares. The screen wraps around vertically and horizontally.

Scoring is ten times the points remaining on any bomb when defused, steps taken, and bonus points for flags collected. Skulls, naturally, kill. After screen one has been cleared, screen two offers another hazard in the form of yellow boots which also kill on contact. The boots increase per screen to a maximum of four.

CRITICISM

'At first glance this game looks colourful and fun but fairly simple. Playing it for a few minutes convinced me otherwise. It's still fun but not that easy. It's a bit like those word puzzles where there is one gap left for you to shuffle the squares up and down to make words. The scroll facility actually makes the game more skilful in a way — and possible, because of the time limit. When you've defused a bomb, another appears randomly, which gives you a second to spot it, the hazards in between and the best route, then four seconds left to get there. It's all very frenetic, and by the time there are four dancing boots leaping about as well, the screen gets busy enough to make it hard to spot the wretched bomb. More addictive than I first thought.'

'This is an original game with plenty of appeal — the graphics, although simple and unanimated, look neat, bright and clean. The keys are well laid out, with two playing options and it has one of the best Hall of Fame entry methods I've used. It's fun to play, but has the drawback of being a high points only scoring game once you get the hang of it, therefore, a bit low on addictivity, but very good for the 16K.'

'Graphics are simple but effective and the sound is great, nice continual step by step tune and wonderful 'boing' noises when you defuse a bomb. The scrolling is done by holding down a scroll key and using the direction keys for left or right. If you scroll next to a skull and don't get the timing right, you can easily stop scrolling, go into move and run into the skull. I wouldn't say it's a maior game, to be honest, but I did find trying to beat the hi-score became something of an obssession for an hour. Buy it if you like the idea, but it should be a big hit with kids'.

COMMENTS

Control keys: Q/Z = up/down, I/P = left/right, B to SPACE = scroll, or the cursor keys and 0
Joystick: Kempston, Protek, AGF or cursor clip on.
Keyboard play: responsive
Colour: good
Graphics: simple but good
Sound: very good
Skill levels: 5 (speeds, plus time bombs get faster) and more skulls)
Lives: 3
General rating: a simple but original idea which will probably appeal to many players although its addictive qualities may not be very high.

Use of computer	**83%**
Graphics	**62%**
Playability	**79%**
Getting started	**82%**
Addictive qualities	**54%**
Value for money	**65%**
Overall	**71%**

2003 A Space Oddity

Producer: **DK Tronics**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£4.95**
Language: **BASIC & m/c**
Author: **Chris Fayers**

The on-screen instructions are quite amusing in explaining that due to a strange combination of weeties, milk and sugar you have materialised in another time and dimension (which relates to the cassette inlay design, showing a space ship approaching a black hole that presumably could manage three at a time). It goes on to tell you that on your way to earth you will encounter all sorts of monsters and nasties, and to be honest, you are likely to be grabbed by the ghoulies.

The title includes the word 'Oddity' and that's just what this game is. It manages to combine some of the elements of a Star Trek game with that of a text/graphics adventure. The object, as stated, is to get back home and deepest space is treated a bit like a haunted manor house in a traditional adventure. There are doors in space, stairways going up and down, forcefields (which kill) and alien space ships which may or may not be empty.

The top half of the screen contains the display, although it would hardly be accurate to describe this as graphics in the accepted sense — another of the oddities. It is actually a multi-coloured panel containing description of options open along the lines of: WEST — FORCEFIELD; NORTH — ALIEN S/S; EAST — DOWN. Below is a second panel with a crude space scene in blue and white with hi-res drawings depicting simple outlines of what has been described above. Stargates, when they appear, are attractively animated. The lower half asks what you want to do. Heading for an alien ship results in your being told that there is an alien inside, what do you want to do — Go in — Leave — or Help. Help will tell you what's in there and how strong it is. If you go in you may combat the alien mentally or with a laser or you may run. Heading for doors offers you the option of going in or listening. Travelling through a stargate sends the screen into paroxisms of colour flashes before re-establishing the normal screen.

CRITICISM

'This is one of those adventures where you have very little in the way of freedom — it's all menu-driven. Combats are described and the results given, dead or alive. Although in some respects the responses are quite instant, at times you have to wait for ages while a little graphic effect takes place, which becomes very irritating — although, as it says, you can press G to speed it up. Additionally, the sound is a cons-

tant twittering electronic noise which eventually drives the player mad. Not all that good, despite the low price.'

'I'm afraid the sound on this game got to me almost before the first alien did. It does have some very odd colours and graphic arrangements, but they aren't sufficient to overcome the way the adventure plays, which is to offer you options that limit what you can do very severely. With this sort of adventure, there is no adventure. It becomes a matter of saying, press a key and let's see what they throw at us next.'

COMMENTS

Colour: even odder
Graphics: rather odd, but reasonably effective
Sound: maddening
General rating: not really an adventure, and certainly not arcade. Not particularly good value for money.

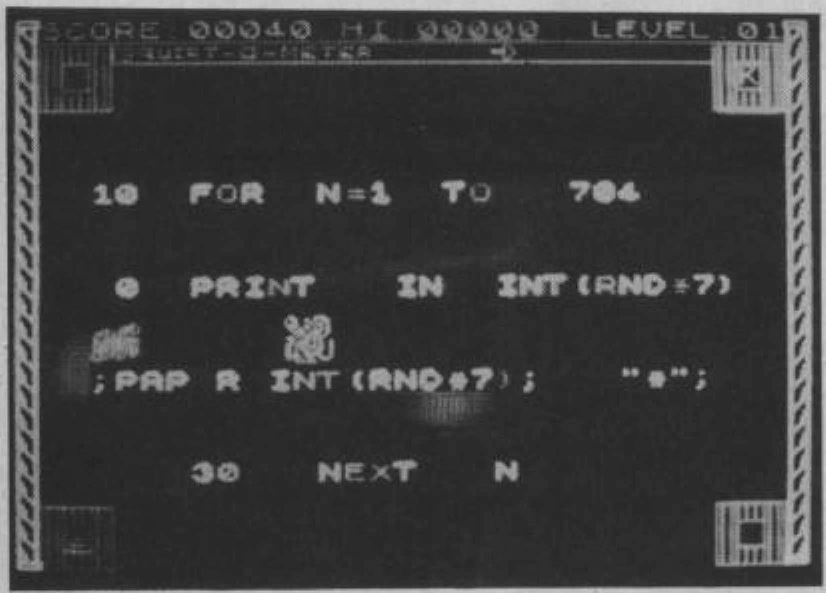
Use of computer	55%
Graphics	60%
Playability	43%
Getting started	55%
Addictive qualities	35%
Value for money	45%
Overall	49%

Micro Mouse Goes De-Bugging

Producer: **M.C. Lothlorien**
Memory required: **16K**
Retail price: **£5.95**
Language: **Machine code**
Author: **Derek Brewster**

10 FOR N = 1 TO 704
20 PRINT INK INT (RND *'); PAPER INT (RND *7); "*";
30 NEXT N

Well it may not be the most stirring on-screen instructions you've ever seen for an arcade game, but it happens to be the beginning of this one. The problem is that some characters within this weeny program listing are flashing and keep disappearing. The cause of their disappearance soon manifests itself — or themselves. Yes, folks, you've guessed the problem — there is a bug in the program, or several in fact. Red ones, green ones, purple ones and ones with pink spots on them. They keep nipping around the screen, whipping the CHRS out of the lines and restoring them to one of the four corners. If this goes on for too long there will be a serious systems crash (that's crash with a small 'c').



Practice in BASIC programming — may come in useful.

Can you take on the daunting task of **micro mouse**, whose job is to dash about, collect the errant letters from the four corners, and restore them where they are needed? As fast as you work, the bugs are bugging about like nobuggies business, whipping them out again. Contact with a busy bug delays you, but there is a remedy: a glowing mass of Datakill, run over it, and you're empowered to spray the bugs, which gets rid of them for a few moments, at least until you run into one, then the Datakill is returned to the base of the screen again. Meanwhile those CHRS are all on the blink and vanishing once more.

CRITICISM

'I'm not quite sure why a mouse should be thought of as a de-bugger (if you'll pardon the expression), but he's quite cutely drawn, so perhaps that's alright. The graphics are all quite large, the bugs especially look very good, with twinkle toe animated legs and very smooth movement. In a sense it's a rather depressing task, Hurculean almost, for as hard as you replace the letters, the faster the bugs take them away. Perhaps that's the main drawback to the game, that it doesn't really seem to get anywhere. Still, the getting nowhere is all very jolly and reasonably challenging. I found in the end that I settled for the Datakill and went on a massive bug-killing operation until the system crashed around me.'

'The instructions are a bit average, leaving you to find out really how to play the game. Very unlike Lothlorien. Smooth, above average graphics and a busy screen. I suppose it could be useful teaching BASIC and de-bugging programs, but otherwise I can't really recommend it.'

'It's a good idea, and the execution is very good, nice large graphics that move very smoothly, but nevertheless, it doesn't really have arcade appeal for me. The obvious trouble with it as a game is that no real skill, beyond a straightforward ability to manipulate your micro mouse as swiftly as possible, is called for, so after a few minutes playing it begins to lose its attraction. One good point is that it has user-definable keys. Fun to play but not very addictive.'

COMMENTS

Control keys: definable, four direction and one for fire
Joystick: most types can be catered for with the definable keys
Keyboard play: responsive, 8-directional
Colour: good
Graphics: above average, very smooth
Sound: average
Skill levels: 1
Lives: 1
General rating: average, fun to play but not very addictive.

Use of computer	79%
Graphics	70%
Playability	58%
Getting started	44%
Addictive qualities	40%
Value for money	55%
Overall	58%

Death Cruiser

Producer: **Noble House**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£5.95**
Language: **Machine code**

The time is a future century and we're in the days of the 'Khasirah Empire'. The khasirans are a peace loving people who live on the planet of Zargat. To keep the place peaceful, they have done what all peace-loving peoples do, they have built a battleship of awsome power to defend the galactic corridors and named it the *Death Cruiser*.

The 'galactic corridors' are represented in the game as grid of streets', laid out around regular squares. The width of the corridors vary from 'street' to 'street' and from screen to screen, with the general layout changing radically between the screens. The Death Cruiser appears at the centre of the base as each game or life commences. Aliens appear and can move in any direction along the corridors, usually at the screen extremities, and proceed to hunt the Death Cruiser with single-minded determination.

You can fire in any of the four directions with twin laser blasts, but the aliens are very fast in returning fire. Contact with any of them is fatal. The aliens each have different attack modes, some firing randomly down or across corridors, others homing in first. Bonus blocks appear, and if destroyed, it weakens the aliens' resolve.

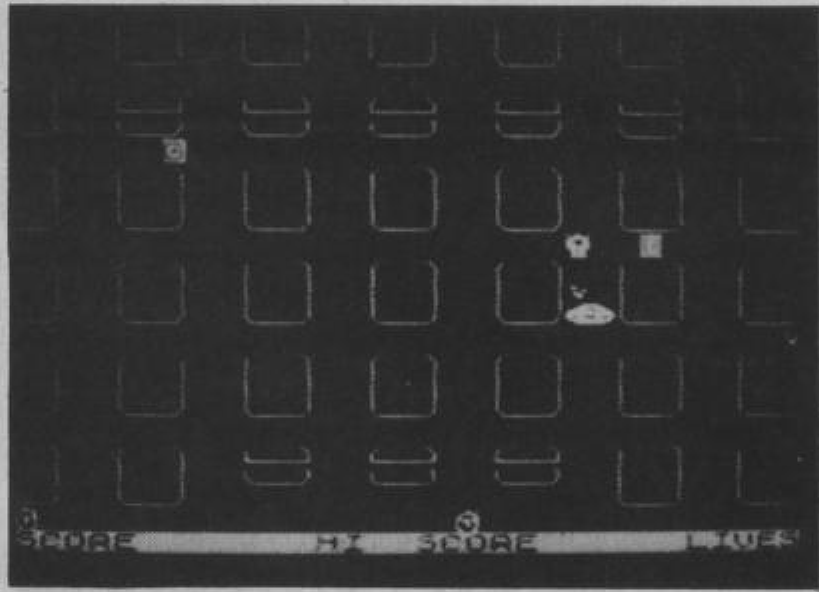
CRITICISM

'The first thing that struck me about this game was the graphics. Although they are quite small in general scale, they are quite neatly drawn and detailed, but it's the movement which is surprising. Quite the smoothest movement I've yet seen in a Spectrum game. There is no flicker or jerkiness at all from the pixel movement. It's a bit difficult to get into due to lack of instructions about the game objectives, although the general idea is immediately apparent. I think it would have been

useful to have a display of aliens to be encountered, and points scored for hitting them. These aliens are extremely intelligent, constantly checking your position and rapidly hemming you in.'

'It requires concentration and lighting decisions to succeed at this game. There are a lot of aliens on screen, each materialising one after the other, six in all on the first screen. One type keeps vanishing only to reappear in another part of the screen. When two or even three aliens are converging on your position, it becomes quite unnerving, and as they will start firing if you don't get out of the way or destroy them with your laser, your options for safety diminish very quickly. Playing with a joystick, the game is very good, if you're stuck with the present control key layout it is very difficult. The main problem being that the up and down keys are vertically astraddle the left key, with the right key being on the opposite end of the keyboard.'

'I couldn't work out what I was supposed to be doing with the game, apart from shooting aliens. As there are several types, it would help if you knew what they all did. Eventually it became clear that to be promoted to the second screen I had to clear all the aliens. Not an easy task as they keep materialising after you have shot them. Staying alive is hard enough, without having to be skilful enough to kill the load off! With the keys the task is almost impossible, but with a joystick it becomes a challenging game, although I would have liked a few more developments than merely a change of maze layout. Marvellous, smooth graphics. The best I've seen as far as movement is concerned.'

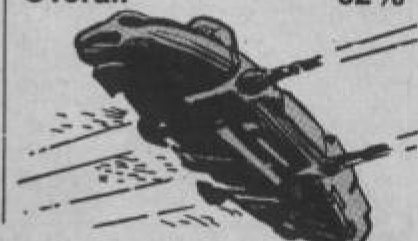


Smooth mover meets immoveable force in Death Cruiser.

COMMENTS

Control keys: Q/P = left/right, 1/CAPS = up/down, SYM SHIFT plus direction key = fire
Joystick: Kempston
Keyboard play: generally responsive, although with key layout, firing quickly can be a problem
Colour: straightforward, but well used
Graphics: excellent smooth movement
Sound: average
Skill levels: 2 speeds, 2 levels of difficulty (aliens more intelligent)
Lives: 3
Comment: the game would be greatly improved with user-definable keys, and we believe Noble House are intending to add them as soon as possible, as well as more detailed instructions.
General rating: A game which proves that it doesn't have to look fast to be fast, and despite appearances, is very hard to play. Good with a joystick, average with keys.

Use of computer	48%
Graphics	75%
Playability	63%
Getting started	43%
Addictive qualities	73%
Value for money	67%
Overall	62%



fantasy
SOFTWARE

The battle could be yours.....
.....but it won't be easy!



This is 'ZIGGY', shown above, in his exploratory capsule and is a true representation of the on-screen graphics.

THE PYRAMID

THE PYRAMID is an arcade style game which has a very adventurous feel to it.

The Pyramid contains 120 chambers on 15 levels. In order to get from one chamber to another you must fight off the indigenous aliens to collect an energised crystal which will neutralize the force field guarding the two exits.

The Pyramid is inhabited by a total of 60 weird and exotic alien types, all of which are beautifully animated. You will meet a whole variety of demons, droids, insects and monsters, with a sprinkling of the more unusual, the extra-terrestrial tweezers, galactic strawberry, cosmic claw, mutant eye, plus a whole host of entities that defy rational description. You'll no doubt invent your own nicknames.

You proceed to explore the pyramid from top to bottom with the difficulty generally increasing with the depth of level. Depending on the choice of exit from each chamber you are likely to have a different game every time you play.

Apart from the challenge of trying to achieve the highest score possible the pyramid contains a number puzzle to solve. The more chambers you successfully visit the more information is gathered to enable you to discover the secret numbers of the pyramid. The puzzle won't take you days to solve, it will probably take you a few months.

DOOMSDAY CASTLE

DOOMSDAY CASTLE consists of a labyrinth of 74 complexly inter-connected Halls and Passages where you will meet a whole host of adversaries serving the infinitely evil Scarthax, the Garthrogs, the Orphacs, the phenomenally nasty Googly Bird and the Urks which manifest themselves in over fifty unbelievably weird and wonderful guises.

Scarthax has scoured the Universe to bring together the six ancient stones of lifeforce. United in Doomsday Castle they are being used to wield an irresistable power over the cosmos, emanating waves of corruption through every galaxy.

To save the Universe, you must battle your way through the Castle to find and collect the six stones and use their force against Scarthax to destroy Doomsday Castle, hopefully escaping yourself before the final cataclysmic explosion.

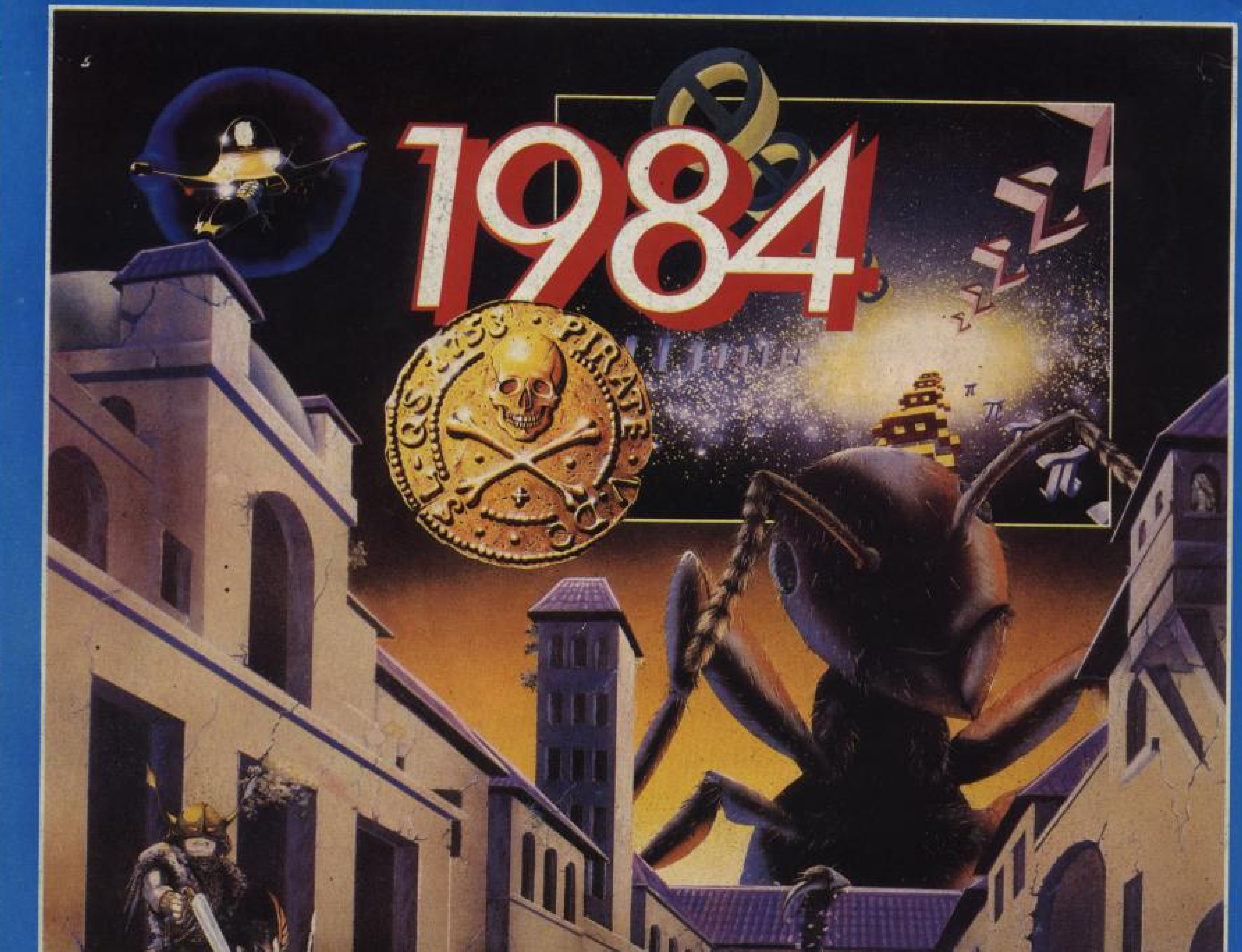
The task is not easy (saving the Universe never is!) and it will take you many games to unfold the structure of Doomsday Castle and discover the locations of the ancient stones.

The addictive arcade style action will keep you coming back to play but the overall challenge should still keep you occupied for months.

FANTASY SOFTWARE is available from W.H.SMITHS, JOHN MENZIES, BOOTS, LASKYS, GREENS, RUMBELOWS, SPECTRUM GROUP, COMPUTERS FOR ALL and all other good software retailers.

The Pyramid at £5.50 and Doomsday Castle at £6.50 from

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